"In a lively and sophisticated study, Nancy Reagin answers the question, 'why did housework and the Hausfrau achieve iconic status in Germany?' Reagin shows how Germans used ideas about women's roles and domesticity to articulate a national identity. She highlights the domestic objects and practices that, along with regional, patriotic, and dynastic symbols, contributed to what it meant to be 'German' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She shows how domestic notions of Germanness were incorporated into social policy after 1918 and into Nazi programs promoting 'German' domesticity at home and in occupied Poland. By using gender as a tool to understand the history of German nationalism and national identity, Reagin has added a whole new dimension to our understandings of these fields. A 'must read' for students of nationalism, German history, social policy, and Nazism. This book will change the meaning of German nationalism."

– Marion Kaplan, *New York University*

Sweeping the German Nation

Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870–1945

NANCY R. REAGIN
Pace University

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For my parents

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It is customary to close one's acknowledgments by mentioning the family members who supported one's work. I think that it is common to give family the pride of place because it is the children, spouses, and other family members of academics who bear the most intimate burdens associated with research, and who are asked to do the most, to make the work possible.

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dedicated one book to him, I'd like to dedicate this one to my parents, who helped make me what I am. My debt to them truly can never be repaid, but only acknowledged. In my "choice" of parents (as in so much else in my life) I am one of the most fortunate of women.

Sweeping the German Nation

Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870–1945

Introduction

In the domestic tradition of the German wife and mother, I see a more secure guarantee of our political future than in any of our fortresses.
Otto von Bismarck

This book explores the gendered aspects of what has undoubtedly been the most successful ideology to emerge during the last two centuries: nationalism. Nationalism is sometimes discussed only in terms of its more extreme or vivid manifestations: political organizations that seek independence for an ethnic group, or right-wing movements that attempt to take over a preexisting state. In such older narratives, the nation is presented as a work of men: its origin is told as a story of war, conquest, or revolution. But as historians of cultural nationalism have noted, nationalism can also be expressed in the more everyday forms that help to create and sustain national identity: the shared rituals, values, symbols, and assumptions that bind people together as a nation. Some forms of cultural nationalism (national holidays or symbols such as flags) may be consciously and fervently embraced by some of the citizenry. Other manifestations of nationality have blended into the fabric of daily life, so much so that they are hardly noticed by the nation's citizens. Such quotidian aspects of the nation constitute what Michael Billig calls "banal nationalism," the daily habits of social

life, of thinking and of language, that help to reproduce established nations.[1]

In both its obvious and banal aspects, the nation is always a work in progress: national boundaries, symbols, political systems, and identities can and do alter substantially over time. After Italy was welded together out of disparate regions during the 1860s, one of the most prominent Italian nationalist activists, Massimo d'Azeglio, proclaimed, "We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians." Similar to other protonations, the inhabitants of the Italian peninsula, who spoke a plethora of mutually incomprehensible dialects, nonetheless shared a preexisting sense of culture, of peopledom. But many features of the nation were not yet determined and had to be hammered out over decades: what the national language was to be; the nation's boundaries and whether border regions (which were often culturally hybrid) were to be included; and unifying practices such as national rituals, holidays, and symbols. "Invented traditions," created to unify coalescing nations, abounded during the nineteenth century and were usually represented as a revival of "ancient" rituals or symbols of the nation in question.[2]

Like Italy, Germany was a late-forming nation, a state created out of regions that shared a long-standing sense of belonging to Germandom but that also had strong regional and local identities.[3] The unified

[1] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 8. Billig argues, "The most endemic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building."

[2] See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See also Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ch. 2.

[3] There is a substantial literature of the long-enduring strength of regional loyalties and identities in Germany that sometimes existed in tension with the claims of the nation-state. Some historians argue that German national identity was notable (compared to some European states) for the strength of Germans' regional identities and the resulting federalism in its governmental structure. See particularly Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For a discussion of work published during the last decade on

German nation-state not only had to win citizens' loyalties in a culture where most people had strong preexisting regional allegiances and identities (e.g., as Bavarians or Saxons), but also faced the challenge inherent in the fact that the new German state could not claim to represent all ethnic Germans. The particular geographic boundaries that were established in 1871 were not identical with the world of the German *Kulturvolk*, because millions of German speakers lived in the Hapsburg Empire (where they felt perfectly "at home" and had no loyalty to Germany), scattered across the Russian Empire, and indeed in communities of ethnic Germans around the globe.[4] As in Italy, nationalists therefore faced the challenge of inventing "Germans": a form of national identity compatible with Germany's new boundaries and state developed only slowly, in tension and in conjunction with both strong regional identities and the broader identity of a far-flung *Kulturvolk* that transcended Germany's actual boundaries.

In "inventing" Imperial Germany, nationalists could therefore count on the fact that almost all Germans defined themselves as a people with a shared culture (a *Kulturvolk*), but the process of working out a political national identity that was firmly tied to Germany's specific borders was more difficult and halting. The designation of a national anthem or the establishment of a repertoire of patriotic songs is only one example of how German-speaking Europe's shared culture complicated the creation of an Imperial German nationality. As scholars of German musicology have noted, compared with other contemporary Western nations, "Imperial Germany operated from the start with a deficit of national symbols," and German-speaking Europe's musical

this subject, see Nancy Reagin, "Recent Work on German National Identity: Regional? Imperial? Gendered? Imaginary?" *Central European History* 37 (June 2004): 245–71. See also Harold James, *A German Identity, 1770–1990* (New York: Routledge, 1989) for a quite different argument. For the origins and development of Germany as a nation defined by a shared culture, see Otto Dann, "Nationale Fragen in Deutschland: Kulturnation, Volksnation, Reichsnation," in Etienne Francois, Hannes Siegrist, and Jakob Vogel, eds., *Nation und Emotion: Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich, 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995), 66–82.

[4] On the German global diaspora, see Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy R. Reagin, eds., *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

canon (although it was illustrious) could not be easily used to remedy this lack.[5] Many important patriotic music pieces could not be simply adopted by late-nineteenth-century German nationalists, because these pieces were celebrating a cultural German nation that differed substantially from the actual political nation established in 1871. Imperial Germany never did adopt a national anthem. Other efforts to create unifying German public rituals, holidays, or symbols have generally been seen by historians as only partially successful.[6]

But although the process was halting, a national identity that many Germans subscribed to was certainly in place by 1914. Over decades, particularist or regional political parties slowly declined in Imperial Germany, as local identities were reconciled with (and sometimes eclipsed by) national identity.[7] Dynastic figures often served as unifying symbols for the nation in their roles within public festivities. And the shared experiences of the wars of German unification formed a basis for the creation of shared public memories and rituals that memorialized the "founding years," with its heroes and battles.[8] As in other nations, print media helped to articulate and solidify a sense of national community that was linked to Germany's actual political borders.

Some of the most successful aspects of the shared national community were those that were rooted in the private sphere. During the late nineteenth century, notions of Germanness expressed within the household became popular and were often more widely shared than many "public" manifestations of German national identity. Thus, Sedan Day failed as a national holiday in Imperial Germany, but Christmas celebrations (both public and private) grew explosively during the same period, as Christmas – with its domestic values and symbols – came to

[5] Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds., *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 16.

[6] For the limited success of attempts to construct national holidays or symbols, see Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor*; and also Wolfgang Hartwig, "Bürgertum, Staatssymbolik und Staatsbewusstsein 1871–1914," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 16 (1990): 269–95.

[7] The decline of regional particularist parties was widespread by 1900, although, as Abigail Green notes, regional institutions and governments still remained particularly strong in Germany.

[8] See Jean Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813–1916* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

be seen as *the* German holiday *par excellence*, observed even by some German Jews.

This book argues that the articulation of Germanness came to include a particular domestic identity that was interwoven with the period's dominant notions of gender.[9] The evolution of gender roles in German society during the late nineteenth century produced an ideal of the "German" housewife, household, and domestic practices that became interwoven with Germans' national identity. This ideal was also enshrined in discussions of colonial German households in German Southwest Africa before 1914. These understandings of German domesticity and housekeeping were further articulated and promoted by Germany's large housewives' organizations and increasingly incorporated into public policy after World War I. Under the National Socialists, this domestic ideal of national identity was racialized (a process that had begun before World War I), becoming one part of the mix of racism and misogyny that drove Nazi family policy. It also underlay the housekeeping and consumption practices urged on German women by Nazi women's organizations.

Finally, a particular set of convictions about what made up "German" domesticity helped to inform the work of Nazi women's groups in occupied Poland during World War II. This book discusses briefly how Nazi women participated in ethnic-cleansing campaigns, a topic treated at greater length by Elizabeth Harvey's *Women and the Nazi East*.[10] Although I touch on this, I am more interested in how Reich German women brought to Poland worked to "re-Germanize" hundreds of thousands of ethnic German families who were relocated

[9] Until recently, gender was often neglected in the spate of work on European nationalism and nation building inspired by Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York, 1991) although this seems to be changing. Quataert's *Staging Philanthropy* examines how female dynastic figures (especially their involvement in public ceremonies) helped to sustain a "patriotic public" before 1914. For discussions of how particular notions of (generally martial) masculinity helped to shape an understanding of citizenship in Germany before 1871, see Karen Hagemann, *"Männlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre": Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preussens* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2002); and Svenja Goltermann, *Körper der Nation: Habitusformierung und die Politik des Turnens, 1860–1890* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1998).

[10] Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

en masse from the Soviet Union to German-occupied territories, by teaching metropolitan German patterns of household management to these resettled ethnic German housewives.

But although these domestic notions of Germanness led to unexpected and often vicious actions on the part of Nazi women in occupied Poland, for most of the period covered by this book, domesticity played a seemingly innocuous part in the articulation of German national identity. Before 1914, the most easily identifiable symbols and rituals of nationalism were objects such as the enormous monument to the Teutonic warrior Arminius (the *Hermannsdenkmal*) and the periodic festivities staged by German patriots around the monument, or the public celebrations and rituals surrounding the German monarchs.[11] Organized nationalism was more easily associated with aggressive (and largely masculine) right-wing organizations, such as the Pan-German League or the gymnasts' movement, than it was with housewives' associations and publications.[12] Nationalism was most blatant when it surfaced in national rituals and holidays, gatherings, and anniversaries that provoked surges of patriotism – "conventional carnivals of surplus emotion" – that participants saw as special time, outside the routines of ordinary life.[13]

By contrast, domesticity was one of the most banal aspects of Germanness. Although they may have been dull, this book argues that housekeeping and domesticity were nevertheless enshrined as a crucial site of national identity, especially juxtaposed against widely shared stereotypes about the private lives of people in other national communities. The comparisons that German writers made between their own households and those of foreigners were ubiquitous in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century household advice literature and were apparently useful in helping these writers (and their readers) to define what was specifically German in the private sphere. During wartime,

[11] For the drive to build the Arminius monument, see Charlotte Tacke, *Denkmal im sozialen Raum: Nationale Symbole in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vendenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995); for the role that rituals celebrating dynastic figures played in building national identity and the "patriotic public," see Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*.

[12] See Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1866–1914* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1984), and Goltermann, *Körper der Nation*, on the gymnasts' movement.

[13] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 45.

moreover, the routines of housekeeping were thrown into the national spotlight, as housewives were told that their work and household habits were crucial to the nation's interests.

German national identity was successfully constructed because it was rooted not only in public, but also in private rituals and practices. Ordinary Germans used notions of gender, the household, and family to understand the "imagined" national community and their own identities. What sociologist Pierre Bourdieu called the *habitus* of social life – the routines, predispositions, and practices shared by particular groups – included assumptions and objects that helped to define German identity in ways that were sometimes only half-noticed by Germans. But such banal, domestic Germanness was the other side of the coin to the surges of patriotism provoked by a monarch's public appearance or a visit to the Arminius monument.

Bourdieu argued that one's own *habitus* often only becomes apparent when we are confronted with the norms and mentality of a different social group or culture, which provides a contrast to our own assumptions and habits. Certainly, domestic Germanness was most easily noticed when thrown into relief by exposure to the households and private life of other nations, as it was for Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick, the author of a humorous set of observations about private life in Germany published in 1908, *Home Life in Germany*. Mrs. Sidgwick was a German woman who had married an Englishman. Accustomed to German styles of domesticity, she had to adjust to English approaches to household management after her marriage, and she observed English families with wry amusement. When she first heard a discussion of "English housekeeping," she later wrote, "it was a new idea to me that any women in the world except the Germans kept house at all. If you live among Germans when you are young you adopt this view quite insensibly and without argument."[14] Bourgeois English housewives, Sidgwick wrote, left much of their work to the servants and did not maintain really clean houses.

Although she spent most of her adult life in England, Sidgwick clearly admired and preferred the community of German bourgeois *Hausfrauen* to which her mother, aunts, and cousins belonged. Being part of such a community, and its routines of domesticity, helped

[14] Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick, *Home Life in Germany* (New York: 1908), 113.

to shape Sidgwick's sense of her own Germanness. It was a community that was at least partly imagined, in the sense defined by Benedict Anderson, because most of its members would never meet each other, and yet thought of themselves as belonging to a common group.[15] Reading Sidgwick's work (and earlier literature produced by nineteenth-century bourgeois German women) makes it clear that many considered themselves to be part of a community of German *Hausfrauen*, and that this community – and the template of household management that underlay the community – helped define the national identity of women such as Sidgwick's female relatives and acquaintances.

To Sidgwick, it was indisputable that there was a *German* style of housekeeping, and she seems to have defined this community fairly inclusively, as potentially encompassing all the housewives of her homeland. However, the model of domesticity that she looked back on with such longing was urban and bourgeois in its origins. During the period covered by this book, the home life that Sidgwick envisioned – with a wife who could devote most of her day to housework and child care, some hired domestic help, and a particular level of home décor and accoutrements – was simply beyond the reach of most rural households and the urban working classes. And yet bourgeois domesticity was still relatively successful as a basis for national identity, compared to some of the more overt and deliberately crafted symbols, such as Sedan Day, which were offered by German nationalists and rejected by broad segments of the German public. Unlike national markers or rituals associated with Prussia or the Protestant bourgeoisie, such as Sedan Day, the bourgeois ideal of domesticity was accessible and appealing across regional and confessional boundaries. Ultimately, it was so widely accepted that it could become the foundation for social policy.

[15] My discussion of the imagined community of *Hausfrauen* is entirely indebted to Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, esp. pp. 25–6, 37–44, and 67–77. Anderson offers a working definition of such a community as "imagined because the members . . . will never know most of their fellow-members . . . yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion," *Imagined Communities*, 6. Such imagined communities, Anderson argues, are a precondition for a sense of national identity and national community.

As I will show, particular approaches to housekeeping and domesticity helped to define the community of bourgeois German housewives. These standards and assumptions regarding household management shaped women's roles in their families and formed part of their individual self-identities. But these notions of domesticity were also incorporated into German public life. The patterns of daily life and private households I will discuss were constantly influenced by (and affected) public policies and developments in the workplace; public and private were interwoven and mutually dependent. The distinction between public and private was more prescriptive than descriptive.

In popular discussions of the German home during the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, even the most private routines and habits were sometimes seen to have national significance. What could be more private, apparently, than a woman's decisions about how often to wash, what to sew for her children, or what to cook for her family? And what could be more a matter of personal choice? And yet, these decisions were also part of the process of class formation and moved to the heart of discussions of national character by the Imperial period, at the latest. After 1914, the German home was also increasingly the object of attempted interventions by women's organizations, industry, and the state, in the form of home economics education or attempts to change consumers' preferences.

Under the National Socialists, these attempts to influence household management expanded dramatically through a variety of guises and programs: reeducation camps for disorderly families; mandatory domestic service for young women; large-scale campaigns to reshape household consumption; and the introduction of the Mother Cross award, which was distributed to applicants who satisfied not only requirements for fertility, but who also met standards of "proper" housekeeping. Ultimately, these efforts to reshape German domesticity entered the arbitrary and violent campaigns to sort, classify, resettle, and resocialize hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans in occupied Poland after 1939.

This study examines the myth and the practices of cleanliness and housekeeping. It should be clear from the outset, however, that the Germans are not alone in cherishing a belief that they are "cleaner" than those from other cultures. "Cleanliness" plays a role in the construction

of national or ethnic identity and myths of national superiority in a variety of cultures, and certainly throughout the Western World and in European imperialism in the non-Western world. My focus is on development of "cleanliness" (along with such qualities as order, thrift, and time management) and the broader practices associated with domesticity in a single culture. Ultimately, this book traces how a specific style of housekeeping became bound up with German national identity, so much so that it was incorporated, apparently without debate, into the brutal and macabre policies implemented in occupied Poland during World War II.

But the fact that this book limits itself to an examination of domestic norms in a single culture does *not* mean that I am arguing that these values and practices did not exist elsewhere. Undoubtedly they did. This book does *not* seek to demonstrate that German homes were cozier, more orderly, or cleaner than their French, Russian, or British counterparts; such an assertion would be impossible to substantiate. This is a history of self-perception and identity, and of how identity was reflected in both daily life and social policy. Although many German housewives certainly internalized and enacted these standards, I have no reason to believe that a higher percentage did so in Germany than had done so in France, Denmark, or elsewhere.

I have tried, wherever possible, to incorporate evidence about the reactions of actual housewives to this ideal. Certainly, we can find evidence about the norms and goals embraced by some women regarding household management by examining the statements and programs of housewives' organizations. But the aspirations or actual housekeeping of all German women, or even of the "typical" bourgeois German housewife (if she existed), are probably beyond historical reconstruction.

So, although many bourgeois Germans, such as Mrs. Sidgwick, were sure that their housekeeping surpassed that of their foreign counterparts, there is no evidence that they were correct. French women during the late nineteenth century no doubt also thought it a good idea to be very frugal. And similar to the Germans in Southwest Africa, British imperialists thought that they were cleaner than their colonial subjects, and this notion of cleanliness was integral to their racist descriptions of those they ruled over. Many of the attitudes and household standards that Mrs. Sidgwick valued were common among the middle classes in all of the advanced industrial nations of this period, although particular domestic symbols or objects that were venerated (e.g., the German Christmas tree or the institution of British afternoon tea) might vary.

Thus, although bourgeois Germans were sometimes sure that their housekeeping was the best in the world, it most likely was not. And the fact that the German bourgeoisie was able to establish its domestic routines as a model for other classes to emulate was also not unique. The incorporation of the bourgeois model of home life (at least as an aspiration) into German national identity was one more example of the social and cultural accomplishments that David Blackbourne and Geoff Eley argued constituted the silent victories of the German bourgeoisie – the most successful where it was least noticed – in its contest for influence with Imperial Germany's preindustrial aristocratic elites.[16] And as in other Western nations, nothing was more unobtrusive, more taken for granted, and yet less challenged than the fact that an orderly family life and household management were desirable.

Germany did not become a full-fledged parliamentary democracy before 1914, but Germany's bourgeoisie nevertheless achieved a level of economic, cultural, and social influence that paralleled the level enjoyed by their counterparts in other nations during the late nineteenth century. This group was responsible for such developments as the enactment of a German civil code that underwrote bourgeois economic interests; the creation of a host of voluntary organizations and public institutions that made up a large part of the public sphere; and the expansion and reform of higher education and professional certification systems. To this list we can add the construction of a widely shared understanding about the private sphere and what domestic life ought to consist of.

In fact, this bourgeois model had little influence over day-to-day life in aristocratic households (which were generally predicated on preserving claims to standing within that stratum), within working-class families (which generally could not afford to copy the bourgeoisie), or the peasantry. But this ideal of domesticity became what many working-class families at least aspired to realize, in part. And it was incorporated

[16] David Blackbourne and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

into nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century discussions about what Germanness consisted of, and later into public policies that influenced private households. In all this, the success and influence of the German bourgeoisie mirrored that of its counterparts in other nations. In spite of what Mrs. Sidgwick and her contemporaries believed, in the German domestic sphere there was no strikingly German *Sonderweg*, at least before 1933. As elsewhere, the German bourgeoisie was able to enshrine its ideal of private life as an aspiration for millions who were not bourgeois.

German bourgeois housewives' organizations, along with the advice literature produced for housewives, often mirrored their counterparts in other nations in the pursuit of the standardization of home economics education and the promotion of particular domestic norms and standards. Later, the economic protectionism that was characteristic of German housewives' organizations during the Weimar period could be found elsewhere in the Western world. But after 1933, there was a sharp divergence from practices in other nations in this area, as in so many others, at least in terms of public policy. National Socialist women's organizations carried forward many of the programs and values propagated by Weimar housewives' groups and further racialized them, as well as implementing them on a far broader scale, using more compulsion and violence than their predecessors could ever have dreamed.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of the norms and practices of domesticity, as they developed among urban middle-strata bourgeois Germans after the middle of the nineteenth century. As in other contemporary nations, specific styles of household management and family life became vehicles for class formation among the bourgeoisie; particular practices and standards for housekeeping helped to form a template for domesticity. Chapter 2 examines how this style of household management was incorporated into the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century German discourses on national character, both that of Germans and of other nationalities. In scholarly and popular literature, a particular approach to housekeeping, holidays, and domesticity was now seen as a hallmark of Germanness, both within Germany and outside its borders in ethnic German communities in Germany's colonies.

Before 1914, this model of domesticity was not explicitly politicized in any partisan sense and housewives were only loosely organized.

Chapter 3 discusses how the hardships and shortages that World War I imposed on German civilians accelerated the organization of housewives into "professional" associations and drew the state's attention to the importance of housekeeping, because the housewife's use (or misuse) of resources was now linked to the success of the war effort. After 1918, bourgeois housewives' groups continued to expand in number and became explicitly politicized. Their leadership (and grass-roots membership) now overlapped heavily with that of Weimar center-right and right-wing nationalist political organizations. In their work, Weimar leaders of housewives' associations increasingly linked specific practices of housekeeping to a nationalist political agenda. By 1932, the two largest housewives' organizations were part of a broad nationalist electoral coalition that included the National Socialists.

Instead of being dissolved outright (the fate of liberal or feminist women's groups), housewives' associations were largely absorbed into Nazi women's auxiliary organizations after 1933. Chapter 4 examines how the initiatives of Nazi women's groups expanded on many of the programs launched initially by Weimar housewives' organizations, taking small pilot projects that had only existed in a few localities before 1933 (e.g., the proposal to force all young German women to complete a "year of service" doing some sort of domestic work) and reworking them into nationwide programs. Nazi organizations also carried forward many of the norms of housekeeping that had been widespread among the German bourgeoisie before 1933. But Nazi rhetoric and social policy linked particular approaches to housekeeping with "race," making women's membership in the *Volksgemeinschaft* (racial or national community) contingent on orderly housekeeping.

Chapter 5 turns to the Nazi Four-Year Plan (which drove Germany's preparations for World War II) and discusses how housewives were cajoled (or compelled) to change how they shopped, cooked, and sewed in order to support German rearmament. Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on the ways in which Nazi agencies and women activists applied widely shared standards for "German housekeeping" in their work in occupied Poland after 1939, using the metropolitan German notions of domesticity as a yardstick to measure the Germanness of the so-called *Volksdeutschen*, and as the lynchpin of their efforts to "re-Germanize" families whose ethnicity was dubious or shaky.

Throughout this study, I am interested in how domesticity became one component within a "repertoire" of German national identities, in which Germans used not only regional, public patriotic, and dynastic symbols, but also domestic objects and practices to define what it meant to be German. Domestic notions of Germanness were worked into the fabric of daily life, popular culture, and social policy: in the programs of bourgeois housewives' groups; in scholarly and popular discourse regarding national character; in how ordinary people thought of the nation and their place in it; and in the work of Nazi women's groups after 1933.

Symbols rooted in private life were powerful building blocks of national identity and were at least as effective as public ceremonies or rituals, because the practices of private life were usually seen as "unpolitical" and thus more "naturally" and essentially German. They were potentially more inclusive than monuments or holidays, such as Sedan Day, that appealed only to particular political groups. Unlike the Arminius monument, Christmas trees and closets of clean linens appealed to much of the German public (even those who couldn't afford them) and thus could sustain national community powerfully, albeit unobtrusively.[17]

Harold James observed that "there are always, in any society, not one but several storytellers in the invention of nationality, who usually cannot agree even about the general structure of the narrative."[18] Domesticity was a powerful part of the German narrative, but it was only one of several strands that Germans used to weave their story. But the narrative of Germanness (compared to that of other contemporary Western nations) was particularly changeable because Germany was a late-forming nation whose boundaries and political systems fluctuated radically during the period covered by this book. And perhaps it was the unstable nature of the German nation-state – both its geographic boundaries and its form of government – during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that made domesticity even more important as a foundation for national identity.

[17] Alon Confino argues in *The Nation as Local Metaphor* that the notion of "Heimat" (home town or locality) was a much more successful unifying symbol than the national holiday (Sedan Day) proposed by German nationalists.

[18] James, *A German Identity*, 8.

In the narratives of nationality that Germans told themselves during the period covered in this book, the practices of private life seemingly stood outside of historical processes, constituting an essential normalcy that allegedly did not change. By using family life and domesticity as one foundation for national community, Germans could draw on a set of symbols and practices to sustain nationality that were "timeless" and private, relatively nonpartisan and hence more universally appealing. These worked effectively to sustain the national community under successive political regimes, even as so many of the other things conventionally used to define a nation – stable geographic boundaries, ruling dynasties, flags, and particular political systems – were refurbished or remodeled during the first half of the twentieth century, or even swept clean away.

1

The *Habitus* of Domesticity

Keep order, love it. Order saves you time and effort.

Popular saying, often embroidered on dishtowels and samplers in Imperial Germany

Housekeeping, and the broader gestalt of domesticity that household management and family life produce, is the result of a series of choices made by the family members, and particularly by the woman who runs the household. How to decorate the home? How often to clean the rooms, and what standards should one clean to (e.g., is mopping enough, or must the floor be waxed or polished as well)? How often should clothes and linens be washed, or the bed sheets changed? Which items should be ironed after washing? What sorts of foods should be purchased, grown for oneself, canned or preserved, prepared, and eaten, and how often should these actions take place? Should meals be served hot or cold, or should the meal consist of several courses? How often should the family entertain; whom should they entertain; and what should be offered to the guests? What holidays should be celebrated, and how should they be observed? What routines and rules should the children be trained to observe? How much direct supervision should the children receive from their mother, or should she delegate this task to someone else? How should family members be dressed, particularly when they go out in public?

The choices, like the work, are never ending. The allocations made by the housewife using the assets available to her, which include

financial assets, but also the more intangible sorts of cultural and social capital that she can draw on, such as help from relatives, domestic skills, training, and "good taste," form the practice of housekeeping. Household management strategies vary from family to family, but generally follow certain norms and patterns within each social group. In Imperial Germany, for example, housewives among the bourgeoisie and the working class were expected to do most of their own sewing, and certainly all of their own mending, as reflected in Clara Geissmar's memoir. Geissmar, a bourgeois Jewish woman, recounted an incident she witnessed during the 1860s:

> Once we saw the daughter of a neighbor go by our house, carrying a small package. My mother ... spoke to the young woman, and asked her where she was going. The young woman ... confessed that she was going to see an old lady who darned stockings for a small sum. She said she had two small children and no servant, and she spent all her time caring for children, cooking, and washing and cleaning, and had no time for mending. And now there was such a pile of socks. My mother became very stern, and said that this was a serious problem ... such an action was the first step on a path which would rapidly pull the woman downwards ... *no family could get ahead, if a healthy woman paid for things to be done that she could do herself* ... [my mother told her] to go home, and never think of such a thing again. The young woman evidently realized that she stood on the brink of a criminal career, and promised to do better in the future. My mother took the package from her, and promised the contrite woman that this once she would do the stockings for her.[1]

The choices made by housewives such as Geissmar's mother and her neighbor (similar to other sorts of social practices) are strongly influenced by what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu called *habitus*, as it was expressed in the field of household management. The term was coined by Bourdieu to refer to a set of dispositions, assumptions, values, and norms that are internalized through socialization (usually at the subconscious level) and strongly influence how people act and feel. *Habitus* thus shapes the mentality of individuals within a group and, combined with the assets available to each person – financial assets, but also other sorts of social and cultural advantages, such as personal

[1] From Clara Geissmar's memior located in the Leo Baeck Institute Archive in New York; the italics are mine. I am indebted to Marion Kaplan for calling this source to my attention.

connections – determines the practices (habits, rituals, and actions) of both individuals and groups.[2]

A mundane domestic example of how *habitus* influenced household practice was the assumption (common throughout the Western World) that starched and ironed fabrics looked "better" than clean but wrinkled cloth. Among the German bourgeoisie, who usually had the assets – at least one servant, or money for a laundrywoman – to make an exuberant amount of ironing possible, there was an expectation that everything made of fabric (even dishtowels and underwear) should be ironed, precisely folded, and sometimes even tied into bundles with ribbons. Bourgeois table settings were assumed to reflect both a family's wealth and the woman's level of culture or taste, which led to particularly elaborate displays for holidays and entertaining. Other norms were less class-bound and were shared across the social spectrum – for example, that wearing a stained apron meant that a woman was slovenly or even morally suspect – and reflected the belief that what one wore should be spotless, and that the apron was an important indicator of one's level of cleanliness.

Bourgeois norms for housekeeping meant that a family could acquire intangible but real benefits from a "solid domesticity" (respectability, even admiration from acquaintances, and an increased network of social connections), depending on how well the housewife managed her household. And good management also included thrift, which increased the family's savings. If the housewife was skillful and pursued sound strategies, her family's standard of living and social status would be maintained or even enhanced.

The *habitus* of housekeeping shaped bourgeois women's daily work, and was also omnipresent in advice literature, domestic science courses, and in the work of housewives' organizations. Both the mentality and practices could and did alter over time, and across generations,

[2] This is a very simplified and abbreviated summary of some of the most basic concepts in Bourdieu's work. For an introduction to these concepts, see Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar, and Chris Wilkes, *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu. The Practice of Theory* (St. Martin's Press: New York, 1990), 1–25; see also Ingo Mörth und Gerhard Fröhlich, eds., *Das symbolische Kapital der Lebensstile. Zur Kultursoziologie der Moderne nach Pierre Bourdieu* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1994). Some of Bourdieu's most important essays are collected in Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

however, as the result of technological changes (e.g., the introduction of new household appliances), a decline in the availability of servants, or as a result of larger economic changes (e.g., those created by the Nazi Four-Year Plan, which created shortages of key domestic products). Both norms for housekeeping and household practice varied significantly across region and by class, as those who tried to reshape housewives' habits (especially their shopping habits and diet) found out during the two world wars. Thus, there was sometimes a gap between the values and practices that advice writers, housewife activists, or domestic science educators tried to promote, and those that actually existed in varying social groups and communities.

The approaches to household management discussed were promoted not only by writers, educators, and organizations, but were also reproduced through simple peer pressure or other sorts of social control. Oral histories of cohorts of German housewives who grew up during the early twentieth century offer persuasive evidence that many housewives from a variety of social backgrounds did internalize the high standards of cleanliness and thrift that I will discuss, and strove to manage their households accordingly.[3] Some women indeed internalized such norms so thoroughly that they even made their families unhappy with incessant cleaning: such a woman was sometimes referred to as a *Putznarr, Putzteufel*, or *Putzfimmel* (none of these terms have English equivalents, but all would translate loosely as "a devil for scrubbing"). Although the technology would alter cleaning processes somewhat over the course of the twentieth century, housewives were still inspecting each other's work – noticing what sorts of foods their neighbors purchased in local shops; how children were dressed when they were sent outside the house; the cleanliness and quality of others' laundry hung out to dry; how often windows and curtains were

[3] Bärbel Kuhn and Karen Hagemann have published studies of cohorts of housewives who were born around or after the turn of the century, which make clear the role that socialization and social control played in reproducing the *habitus* of housekeeping and domesticity I discuss here. See Karen Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik. Alltagsleben und gesellschaftliches Handeln von Arbeiterfrauen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Dietz, 1990) and Kuhn, *Haus-Frauen-Arbeit 1915–1965. Erinnerungen aus fünzig Jahren Haushaltsgeschichte* (St. Ingbert: Roehrig Universitaetsverlag, 1994). See also Karen Hausen, "Grosse Wäsche. Technischer Fortschritt und sozialer Wandel in Deutschland vom 18. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 13 (1987): 273–303.

cleaned; the state of bedding hung out the window to air, and so forth – well past World War II.[4] In some small German towns and villages, this sort of social control is still very effective today.

This chapter discusses the evolution of collective standards among the German bourgeoisie during the Imperial period regarding household management, housekeeping practices, and the specific symbols of domesticity that arose out of housework, all of which underlay such social control. Norms, practices, and symbols helped articulate a collective identity for bourgeois German women, one which contained both standards for judging individuals within the group (i.e., measuring whether a woman was a "good housewife") and a means of proclaiming one's membership within the group (e.g., maintaining a well-ordered cabinet of snow white linens). Historians have documented how the household management of middle-class women in a number of nineteenth-century cultures helped to define and reproduce class structure and identity.[5] A particular model of domesticity functioned within the German bourgeoisie as a key part of the process of class formation during the late nineteenth century. But it ultimately laid the foundations for a gendered national identity that was rooted in the practices of private life.

We should be clear at the outset, however, that this chapter is concerned with German housewives' norms and self-image, not their actual housekeeping: available sources make this inevitable. Norms were

[4] See Jennifer Loehlin, *From Rugs to Riches. Housework, Consumption, and Modernity in Germany* (New York: Berg, 1999), 138–9.

[5] The use of domesticity to create, define, and reproduce class identity and boundaries is well established for a number of nineteenth-century Western cultures. Notable contributions to this rich literature include Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes. Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Jane Rendall, *Women in an Industrializing Society: England, 1750–1880* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class. The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work. Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Bonnie Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt. Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920–1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Sibylle Meyer, *Das Theater mit der Hausarbeit. Bürgerliche Repräsentation in der Familie der wilhelminischen Zeit* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1982).

manifested in daily life, certainly. We have abundant evidence that Clara Geissmar's mother was no anomaly, and that many bourgeois housewives strove to meet the expectations of their neighbors. But we cannot measure how compliance with these norms might have varied from one social group to the next. Nor can we verify whether (as Mrs. Sigdwick maintained in *Home Life in Germany*) German women really did keep cleaner houses than their counterparts in other nations: we only know that many thought that they did so. No doubt many women from other cultures could match the Germans, however: pressed, pristine bed sheet for bed sheet. I am concerned with self-definition and with norms so deeply internalized that they were usually taken for granted and seldom questioned. However, we cannot determine the realities of housekeeping in Germany as compared to elsewhere. The idealized standards promoted in German advice literature were important as yardsticks for the organization of identity: on an individual basis (in helping to determine whether a woman's reputation) and, later, in the context of national comparisons.

Domestic Practices and Bourgeois Class Formation

Advice literature for German housewives (and the approach to housekeeping promoted therein) emerged gradually during the course of the nineteenth century, linked to the growing size and internal cohesion of the German bourgeoisie (*Bürgertum*) and to changes in this group's household technology and consumption patterns.[6] Germany's rapid industrialization after 1850 led to an enormous expansion in the number of men employed in administrative, civil service, management, professional, and other white-collar positions. The wives and daughters of such men were increasingly removed from wage-earning work

[6] The literature on the formation and growth of the German bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century is substantial. Of particular interest for my work here are Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 13–15; Konrad Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 127–8; Hansjoachim Henning, *Das westdeutsche Bürgertum in der Epoche der Hochindustrialisierung 1860–1914 Teil I: Das Bildungsbürgertum in den preussischen Westprovinzen* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1972); Rudy Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism: Marburg, 1880–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 12–13; Werner Conze and Jürgen Kocka, *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert* 4 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985–92).

(or could earn money only in limited ways) and were expected to devote themselves full time to housekeeping and child rearing, with the help of one or more servants. Before the nineteenth century, middle-strata women had almost always combined the physical care of their families (e.g., cooking, clothing production) with income-producing activities: working in artisans' shops, in merchants' businesses, or on farms. Women's tasks varied dramatically, depending on their *Stand* (estate). The withdrawal of women from their families' businesses among the urban bourgeoisie meant that by 1870, women from differing income levels within the bourgeoisie increasingly had more homogenous "job descriptions" than had their grandmothers, and that their working lives converged into the role of the *Hausfrau*.[7] This was true only for the urban bourgeoisie, however. Farmers' wives continued as active partners on their families' holdings because much of agricultural work was defined as "women's work."

Although married women in this class were increasingly classified almost uniformly as "housewives," the German bourgeoisie of the Imperial period was still a varied group, whose members possessed dramatically different levels of income and education. The husbands of bourgeois housewives ranged from lower-level civil servants to well-educated professionals or wealthy businessmen. Their wives might manage large, well-staffed villas, or be struggling to keep up appearances in a small apartment with the help of one "maid for everything." What united the *Bürgertum* above all was a set of shared values, behaviors, and elements of life-style – an emphasis on diligence, self-discipline, conscientiousness, achievement, and thrift – that bound them together into a "moral community."[8] The display of such behavior within the household and family life, as reflected in specific domestic practices, was crucial in securing a family's position among the bourgeoisie. A "solid domesticity" (*solide Häuslichkeit*, denoting thrift, cleanliness, and order in the broadest sense within the home) was as important as income level or occupation in determining social standing. This was particularly true for civil servants' families and the

[7] Bonnie Smith makes the same point about nineteenth-century French bourgeois housewives in *Ladies of the Leisure Class*, as do Davidoff and Hall in *Family Fortunes*.

[8] The term *moral community* is taken from Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism*, 12–13. See also the essay by M. Rainer Lepsius, "Das Bildungsbürgertum als ständische Vergesellschaftung" in Conze and Kocka, *Bildungsbürgertum*, 13.

members of the "educated classes" (*Bildungsbürgertum*), who relied upon social or cultural capital, and not wealth, to secure their status. Indeed, a well-ordered private life was an explicit job requirement for the families of civil servants, who could be reproved or demoted if they or their families led "irregular" lives.[9] The burden of maintaining a certain standard of domesticity, therefore, was carried by bourgeois housewives no matter what their income because it was crucial in anchoring their family's social status.

Advice literature for such housewives – especially "practical" advice, written by and for bourgeois women, which offers evidence as to the norms and household management strategies of this social group – hardly existed before the mid-nineteenth century.[10] But the growth in the number of *Hausfrauen* (especially urban, bourgeois housewives, who formed the main audience for such publications), combined with declining publishing costs after 1850 led to a flood of publications for this market that grew throughout the Imperial period.[11] During

[9] See Barbara Beuys, *Familienleben in Deutschland. Neue Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980), 441; Henning, *Das westdeutsche Bürgertum*, 274–5 and 485–90; Lepsius, "Das Bildungsbürgertum als ständische Vergesellschaftung," 8–13.

[10] Eighteenth-century domestic advice literature, the so-called *Hausväterliteratur* and its offshoot, *Hausmütterliteratur*, largely addressed itself to the *Hausmutter*, a woman who was assumed to run an agricultural estate or farm with her husband. Very little of this literature was concerned with housekeeping in its later sense. Late-nineteenth-century advice literature, by contrast, tended to address urban or small-town housewives. For a discussion of *Hausväterliteratur*, see Inga Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause. Durch Koch- und Haushaltsbücher zur bürgerlichen Hausfrau* (Pfaffenweiler: Centarus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1993), 17–27; Sabine Verk, *Geschmacksache. Kochbücher aus dem Museum für Volkskunde* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1995), 8–12; and Marion Gray, "Prescriptions for Productive Female Domesticity in a Transitional Era: Germany's Hausmütterliteratur, 1780–1840," *History of European Ideas* 8 (1987): 413–26 and "Bourgeois Values in the Rural Household, 1810–1840: The New Domesticity in Germany," *The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750–1850*; 1993 proceedings, 23 (1994): 449–56, who notes that this genre, along with the term *Hausmutter*, declined after 1840.

[11] The overwhelming bulk of the advice literature I discuss here addressed itself to an urban audience, assuming that the reader might possess a small garden at most. Rural housewives developed their own organizations and publications much later and will be discussed in Chapter 3. See Renate Bridenthal, "Organized Rural Women in the Conservative Mobilization of the German Countryside in the Weimar Republic," in Larry E. Jones and James N. Retallack, eds., *Between Reform, Reaction, and Resistance. Studies in the History of German Conservatism from 1789 to 1945*

the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, young women from middle-class families had often compiled their own handwritten notebooks about housekeeping. They filled their books with verses, sewing patterns, recipes for homemade medicines, and cooking recipes for dishes that were seldom made or required exact proportions. Recipes often included a notation as to where they came from (Aunt Lina or Frau Dr. B.). These books were often added to over the course of a woman's housekeeping career, and passed on to her daughter. Unless they were married to the owners of agricultural estates, however, they were unlikely to need or use *Hausmütterliteratur*, advice literature produced for women who were married to estate owners.[12]

After 1850, however, bourgeois women could select from the increasing body of publications directed at housewives, including general household advice manuals, cookbooks, domestic science treatises, special columns or supplements in women's magazines, and magazines produced by and for housewives.[13] By the Wilhelmine period, manufacturers had begun to distribute free cookbooks and pamphlets in order to promote their products. Many of the most successful authors or editors of such publications were women from the

(New York: Berg, 1993), 375–405; "'Professional Housewives': Stepsisters of the Women's Movement," in Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan, eds., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 153–73; and "Class Struggle around the Hearth: Women and Domestic Service in the Weimar Republic," in Michael Dobkowski and Isidor Walliman, eds., *Towards the Holocaust: Anti-Semitism and Fascism in Weimar Germany* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 243–64. See also Elizabeth Jones, "Gender and Agricultural Change in Saxony, 1900–1930," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2000).

[12] Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*, 40–2.

[13] Advice literature for housewives was addressed to *bürgerliche* housewives and assumed that the reader had at least one servant. A rare exception to this rule was the best-selling advice manual addressed to working-class women, *Das häusliche Glück*. See Bärbel Kuhn, "Und herrschet weise im häuslichen Kreise. Hausfrauenarbeit zwischen Disziplin und Eigensinn," in Richard van Duelmen, ed., *Verbrechen, Strafen, und soziale Kontrolle* (Stuttgart: Fischer, 1990), 238–77. See Annabel Weismann, *Froh erfülle deine Pflicht. Die Entwicklung des Hausfrauenleitbildes im Spiegel trivialer Massenmedien in der Zeit zwischen Reichsgruendung und Weltwirtschaftskrise* (Berlin: Schelzky and Jeep, 1989); Siegfried Bluth, *Der Hausfrau gewidmet. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte der Hausfrau* (Weil der Stadt: Hadecke, 1979); Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*; and Gisela Marenk and Gisela Framke, eds., *Beruf der Jungfrau. Henriette Davidis und Bürgerliches Frauenverständis im 19. Jahrhundert* (Oberhausen: Graphium Press, 1988).

bourgeoisie forced by circumstances to earn money by writing about what they knew best: housekeeping. Henriette Davidis, a pastor's daughter from a large family, published her famous cookbook in 1844, which ultimately went into sixty-three editions. During the late nineteenth century, it was said that bourgeois households, if they possessed no other books, had at least copies of the Bible and "the Davidis."

Lina Morgenstern, a mother of five who came from a prosperous Jewish family in Berlin, was active in a variety of feminist and charitable organizations and a key figure in the creation of housewives' voluntary organizations. She helped found and led the Berlin housewives' association and edited their widely read magazine, *Die Deutsche Hausfrauen-Zeitung*, for over thirty years.[14] Morgenstern's work and that of her contemporary, Hedwig Heyl, points to the partial overlap between the producers of advice literature for housewives and the activists who created housewives' organizations. After 1870, bourgeois women began to form voluntary organizations for housewives across Germany, and some of the magazines published for housewives were put out by such voluntary organizations.[15]

Before 1890, housewives' associations were formed in a handful of larger German cities. Housewives' groups in Berlin and Königsberg, for example, were among the earliest and largest such groups in Germany, and later played leading roles in housewives' national leagues. During the Wilhelmine period, such organizations proliferated; the first national league of such groups was created in 1908. Housewives' associations before 1914 were primarily concerned with the "servant question," working against servants' unionization, and creating referral bureaus that matched housewife-employers with women seeking

[14] Davidis (as an author) and Morgenstern (as an editor and organizer) were both key figures in the development of the imagined community of *Hausfrauen*. For Davidis, see Bluth, *Der Hausfrau gewidmet*, 57 and Framke and Marenk, *Beruf der Jungfrau*. For Morgenstern, see Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 206–8; see also Jutta Dick and Marina Sassenberg, eds., *Jüdische Frauen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1993), 283–6; Heinz Knoblauch, *Die Suppenlina. Wiederbelebung einer Menschenfreundin* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1997).

[15] *Die Frau im Osten* (which addressed bourgeois women in Eastern Prussia) is another example of advice literature produced for housewives by bourgeois women activists. Hedwig Heyl was the author of one of the most widely read cookbooks and household *Ratgeber*, *Das ABC der Küche* 4th ed. (Berlin: Carl Habel Verlag, 1897).

positions. They also offered a variety of vocational training for younger bourgeois women, including specialized cooking courses, infant care courses, and sewing and handicrafts courses. For married women, they offered lectures and demonstrations about issues of consumption and housekeeping, such as advice on purchasing household goods. The imagined community of *Hausfrauen* was thus fostered by women's contact with both literature and organizational life, which were new vehicles for housewives' collective socialization.[16]

Housewives' magazines, courses, and organizations found an audience because they met a need: changes in household technology and class structure meant that there were aspects of housekeeping that a young woman couldn't simply learn by asking her mother, or by looking it up in mother's notebook. Rapid urbanization (and the transfers to which civil servants in particular were often subject) meant that a woman might not be able to easily consult her mother or aunt. If she was attempting to secure a somewhat higher social status for her family than her parents had enjoyed, a bourgeois housewife might use advice literature to learn to entertain her husband's colleagues, to set the table and fold napkins properly. Advice manuals offered elaborate illustrations for novices on how to create the origami-like folded napkins because the properly set table was an important marker of a prosperous and well-run household. For special events, the housewife would often rent extra china or silver and lay it out in carefully proscribed patterns to achieve maximum effect.

Younger women also turned to advice literature to learn how to cook new foods (e.g., tomatoes or bananas) that their mothers had never used. Housewives' organizations and Davidis' cookbook also taught women to use new devices (e.g., a coal range instead of a fireplace, or using the new glass jars and rubber rings to "put up" fruits and vegetables). Bourgeois women also had to learn how to clean and maintain a plethora of household items, including Turkish carpets and

[16] For the early history of housewives' associations, see Kirsten Schlegel-Matthies *"Im Haus und am Herd." Der Wandel des Hausfrauenbildes und der Hausarbeit 1880–1930* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1995). See also Bridenthal, "Professional Housewives"; Nancy Reagin, *A German Women's Movement: Gender and Class in Hanover, 1880–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 226–34. For the role played by publications in creating imagined communities and group identities, see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37–44.

mahogany furniture, which were now more widely owned than in previous generations. Before the Imperial period, visitors to Germany had noted that even in well-to-do households, carpets were rare and furniture was usually simple.[17] More luxurious décor proliferated in bourgeois homes after 1870, however, and such furnishings were more prone to become filthy, as coal-burning stoves spread soot through the house. The growth of industries supplying consumer goods meant that urban housewives now shopped for foods, rather than relying mainly on self-provisioning, which required knowledge of prices and materials. By reading a housewives' magazine, a woman could learn how to detect adulteration in loose goods, and how to evaluate the color and consistency of products such as coffee or cocoa, which were sold at a "colonial goods" store.[18]

Advice literature and housewives' organizations thus met the real needs of a growing group of women, but they also helped to articulate and define the role of the *Hausfrau*, a term that could increasingly be applied to women from all regions of Germany and from different social strata. They promoted collective identity and norms among German housewives, so that many bourgeois women came to see themselves as constituting a distinct social category. After 1900, bourgeois women within such *Hausfrauen* organizations began to argue that they constituted a *Stand* (a corporate estate), that housework was a "profession," and thus that the job of a *Hausfrau* was a well-defined, highly skilled position.[19] Leaders of such associations saw their groups as being analogous to the organizations emerging among other female professionals (e.g., nurses' associations or teachers' organizations). Such bourgeois women volunteers identified strongly with the community of *Hausfrauen*.

[17] See Charles Loring Brace, *Home Life in Germany* (New York: C. Scribner, 1860).

[18] See Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*, 38–9, 54–5, 60, and 72; Verk, *Geschmacksache*, 57–60. See also Henriette Davidis, *Die Hausfrau. Praktische Anleitung zur selbständigen und sparsamen Führung von Stadt- und Landhaushaltungen* 6th ed. (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann Verlag, 1872); this edition was one of the first (and few) that had some sections addressing rural housewives.

[19] See Schlegel-Matthies *"Im Haus und am Herd"* for the argument by housewives' organizations that theirs was a "profession," see Bridenthal, "Professional Housewives"; Reagin, *A German Women's Movement*, 226–34. See also Brigitte Kerchner, *Beruf und Geschlecht: Frauenberufsverbände in Deutschland, 1848–1908* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1992), 211–43.

Advice literature directed at housewives and the public work of housewives' organizations reminded bourgeois women across the nation of other bourgeois women, who were doing the same kinds of jobs and occupied roughly the same social position as themselves, thus creating an imagined community among such women. In columns devoted to letters from readers, women's magazines gave readers access to recipes and housekeeping tips from women of whom readers would otherwise never hear.[20] Such publications (and later, housewives' organizations) promoted the collective identity of housewives by making readers aware of the universe of thousands of bourgeois women who had similar roles in their families. The community of *Hausfrauen* was an imaginary one (in the sense defined by Benedict Anderson) because most German housewives would never meet each other, and yet increasingly, many thought of themselves as belonging to a common group.[21]

And this imaginary community was implicitly (and often explicitly) a German one. It was full of cultural references to recipes, holidays, and details of housekeeping that were specific to the German-speaking world. As a result, the body of publications aimed at housewives helped to both define and delimit their group identity. Readers were implicitly encouraged to think about and identify with bourgeois housewives across German-speaking Europe, but not outside of it, a fact reflected in the title of Lina Morgenstern's magazine, *Die deutsche Hausfrauen-Zeitung*.[22] The community of *Hausfrauen* was only one of a number of communities created among the European bourgeoisie after the emergence of what Benedict Anderson calls "print capitalism," which

[20] See, e.g., letters to the editor that appeared in *Die Frau im Osten* between 1910 and 1913.

[21] My discussion of the imagined community of *Hausfrauen* is entirely indebted to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, esp. pp. 25–6, 37–44, and 67–77.

[22] I am not aware of any leading domestic science work by a non-German author that was widely read within Germany before 1914. Authors sometimes referred to foreign works (e.g., Catherine Beecher's treatise), but their works reflected local tastes. After 1918, the American trend toward translating Taylorism into the home through "scientific" household management found a following in Germany. See Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity. American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 206–33; Nancy Reagin, "Comparing Apples and Oranges: Housewives and the Politics of Consumption in Interwar Germany," in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Mathias Judt, eds., *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

facilitated the emergence of various vernacular print-languages. Vernacular literature produced for bourgeois readers unified dialects and made readers aware of the universe of thousands of people in their own language and social groups. Fellow readers, Anderson argues, were the "embryo of the nationally imagined community," and the various bourgeois groups who made up these groups of readers were "the first classes to achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis."[23]

But because the *Deutsche Hausfrau* was herself imaginary, authors of magazines and domestic science treatises were trying to establish a set of norms and standards that would apply to women from a variety of regions and middle-strata social groups. This was a difficult task. Invariably, there were differences between income groups and across regions in how these norms were observed, and how households were managed. Lina Morgenstern acknowledged the challenge of trying to construct generalizations that could apply equally to the housekeeping of the wife of a Berlin professor, the daughter of a Bremen merchant, and an elderly spinster in Westphalia.[24] Enormous variation – in terms of geography, income level, social obligations, and religion – existed among the German bourgeoisie, and thus among housewives. The ideal of the *Hausfrau* tried to bridge these differences by denying them, setting standardized approaches to housekeeping. Indeed, some cookbook writers consciously tried to collect recipes that would be useable for all German housewives, so that all German women would learn similar recipes, and (as one author remarked) "also become quite familiar with the vocabulary and expressions used in other German regions."[25] But although some practices and especially recipes varied by region, many norms took root during this period (especially those involving household cleanliness, organization, and display) to which bourgeois women across Germany subscribed.

The definition of *German housewife* was therefore simultaneously inclusive, and exclusive, both in terms of class and region. In a formal sense, the editors of housewives' magazines, cookbook authors, and the leaders of housewives' associations were addressing all German housewives. In theory, any woman could join a housewives' group or

[23] See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 42–4 and 77.

[24] See Lina Morgenstern's note in *Die Deutsche Hausfrauen-Zeitung* 14 (1887): 368.

[25] Quoted in Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*, 30.

purchase "the Davidis." In practice, however, the life-style and assumptions that these groups were predicated upon could not be exported across some social boundaries.

One of the most obvious limitations to this model of housewifery was class and income level. The dues charged by housewives' organizations, and the cuisine and fashions promoted in advice literature (even in the "simple and practical" editions, as opposed to the *gut bürgerliche* versions) were too expensive for working-class budgets.[26] The patterns of consumption that underlay a bourgeois model of housekeeping included the purchase of items that were beyond the reach of poorer households: glass jars and rings for putting up produce; china, cutlery, and linens for entertaining; and porcelain bathtubs, "solid" furniture, and rugs. Thus, much of the advice given by bourgeois women's organizations regarding entertainment, cooking, and how to clean particular objects was inapplicable to working-class lives. And the frugality promoted by such organizations was already a part of poorer households' strategies. Working-class housewives did not form their own organizations before 1914, in part because they were discouraged by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) from forming a group that would be separate from those of other women's occupational groups. Poor women therefore generally appeared in housewives' magazines and organizations' discussions only as the intended beneficiaries of bourgeois reformers' efforts during the Wilhelmine period. The reformers were anxious to teach poor women "proper" methods of housekeeping.[27]

A second important barrier to the widespread adoption of bourgeois housekeeping was the difference in women's work roles in urban and rural households. What urban women understood under the rubric of "housework" was only a small part of the workload shouldered by farmers' wives. Many of the jobs to be done on a medium- or small-sized agricultural holding were specifically classified as "women's

[26] The housewives who helped create the first housekeeping schools in late-nineteenth-century cities tacitly acknowledged that most bourgeois advice literature was impractical for working-class housewives and created new *Ratgeber* explicitly addressed to working-class women, such as the best-selling *Das häusliche Glück*.

[27] For the efforts of bourgeois women vis-à-vis working-class housewives, see the discussion in the following text. For the SPD's refusal to permit the creation of a separate housewives' organization, see Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik*, 133–8. During the Weimar period, working-class housewives did articulate their own concerns in a variety of publications issued by the SPD and the German Communist Party (KPD).

work" in rural German culture: gardening, which included raising fruits and vegetables for the market; feeding pigs, poultry, goats, or rabbits; hoeing and digging root crops such as potatoes or beets, and sorting the resulting harvests; cleaning stalls; and milking, butter and cheese making, and dairy work of all kinds. Unlike bourgeois housewives, farm women did not spend much of their day inside the kitchen and parlor. Instead, they often worked sixteen-hour days, rotating between cellars, stalls, pig pens, laundry rooms, kitchens, gardens, fields, and chicken coops. The pride of a rural family was its fields and stables, and not a "sparkling clean" house or tastefully set table. The farmyard and fields were much more important because they provided the food for the family's survival and secured its reputation in the community.

A healthy younger farm woman was, therefore, not expected to spend most of her waking hours doing what a city woman would have seen as housework. Instead, cleaning and cooking might be left to an older female relative or older child (if the household had such on hand). Indeed, the amount of agricultural work expected of farm women increased after the "agricultural crisis" of the 1870s. As grain prices fell, many smaller farms shifted to intensive cultivation of root crops, livestock, and garden crops. Most of the work in these areas fell to women under the established sexual division of labor in rural communities. During the same period that urban bourgeois housewives were shifting their attention to more elaborate standards and schedules for various sorts of housework, therefore, farmers' wives were shouldering an increased workload in agricultural production. For much of the year, they simply could not aspire to an urban bourgeois model of domesticity, although in the slower winter months they might be able to devote more time to the home. One study of rural households in Saxony found that farm women spent twice as many hours per week on housework in November, compared to June; for most of the year, their work in the fields, garden, and stalls simply took precedence.[28] Housework and child care were therefore jammed into the day's schedule as time allowed, and the domestic standards prevalent in urban bourgeois domestic households were simply inapplicable.

[28] For a discussion of the impact of the agricultural crisis on rural women's workloads and an overview of the sexual division of labor in rural communities, see Jones, "Gender and Agricultural Change in Saxony, 1900–1930," 27–31 and 162.

But a domestic template that could seldom be found in the countryside was relatively successful among women of all religious backgrounds. With some variations, bourgeois Jewish and Catholic women could be and were "proper" German housewives. The obvious adaptation that German Jewish housewives made was in the area of cooking, because many still observed the rules of *kashrut*. Mainstream cookbooks often implicitly excluded Jewish housewives, as such publications heavily featured recipes that included lard and pork, along with special dishes for Christmas. But bourgeois Jewish women who wanted to keep kosher could turn to special cookbooks created for a bourgeois Jewish audience. This subgenre promoted a style of household management that – with its emphasis on thrift, order, and cleanliness – largely resembled that of the German bourgeoisie as a whole, while still trying to preserve Jewish religious and ethnic identity in domestic expressions of Judaism. Housewives could express a sensibility that was both Jewish and bourgeois when they set an impressive Sabbath table, for example, or hosted a "proper" bourgeois seder.[29]

Apart from cookbooks, most mainstream advice literature could be used by Jewish women, and organizations created by bourgeois housewives often included Jewish members. Housewives' magazines generally did not include recipes, kosher or otherwise (Lina Morgenstern did not), and focused on topics that would have appealed to Jewish and Christian readers alike: endless embroidery and craft patterns; articles on how to pose children in photographs; advice on how to teach children proper table manners; mild physical exercises for women; household bookkeeping; and servants. Of the magazines surveyed for this study, only the conservative *Kolonie und Heimat* often included recipes that were not kosher.

There was no such dietary barrier for bourgeois Catholic housewives, who in theory could appreciate and join the publications and organizations created by their Protestant counterparts. In practice, however, most of the best-known writers for this audience came from Protestant circles, and the organized housewives' movement (as was

[29] See Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 72–4; and also a dissertation, "Matzo Balls and Matzo Kleis: A Comparative Study of Domestic Life in the United States and Germany, 1840–1914," soon to be completed by Ruth Abusch-Magder at Yale University.

true for the bourgeois women's movement as a whole) was located largely in Protestant-dominated areas (although Jewish women were certainly also well represented). Catholic bourgeois housewives only began to create their own associations after 1900. When they did so, they organized separately on the basis of confession, a practice that continued until 1933.[30]

The segregation of Catholic housewives' groups mirrored the division between Protestants and Catholics in other sorts of voluntary organizations, as in many other areas of social life during the Imperial period. Although both intermarriage rates and geographical integration between Protestants and Catholics increased during this period, German society was still marked by social and political confessional divisions that had been sharpened by the *Kulturkampf*, a legislative effort by the German government during the 1870s to assert control over the Catholic Church's schools and clergy in Germany, and to curtail the influence of "foreign" Catholic groups such as the Jesuits. Protestant bourgeois parties had generally supported Bismarck's legislative efforts in this area, as they associated Germany unity and national identity with the values of Protestantism. But German Catholics and their Church had bitterly and stubbornly resisted the effort to assert secular control over the Church hierarchy, and the *Kulturkampf*, Helmut Smith persuasively argues, was "an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to create a common national culture across confessional lines."[31]

In the aftermath of the *Kulturkampf*, German Protestants and Catholics had substantial differences in life-style and culture. As groups, they often pursued strategies of self-segregation that were often peaceful – patronizing different shops, taverns, and clubs, for example – but that were sometimes ridden with conflict and disputes. Their differences were particularly acute in what Smith calls "print cultures":

[30] Catholic housewives' groups were founded in some cities before 1914, but Catholic housewives did not create a separate national Catholic housewives' league until after World War I, which was affiliated with the *Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund*. See Chapter 3 for details about Catholic housewives' organizations.

[31] Helmut Smith, ed., *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict. Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11. See also Jonathon Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 226–34. See also Helmut Smith, *Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Germany, 1880–1914* (New York: Berg, 2002).

Catholics and Protestants read different sorts of devotional literature, almanacs, newspapers, and journals. Catholic writers, moreover, were generally excluded from the national literary canon, as defined by Protestant scholars, and the two confessions had sharply contrasting views of German history.[32]

Confessional differences in print cultures certainly spilled over into the domestic sphere as well. Surveys done in Baden in 1889 and 1894 found that Protestant homes typically owned homilies by Luther, hymnals, the Bible, and Protestant devotional literature. Catholic homes generally owned almanacs and novels written by Catholic authors, along with Counter-Reformation works on Jesus or about apparitions of the Blessed Virgin.[33] The walls of Catholic households were apt to feature quite different images from those found in Protestant homes, particularly pictures of the various manifestations of the Virgin.

But the differences between Catholic and Protestant styles of domestic management did not go quite as deep as the statuettes of the Infant of Prague in some Catholic homes might suggest, as bourgeois households of both confessions embraced fairly similar domestic standards for cleanliness, order, and thrift. Similar to Catholic bicyclists' associations and hikers' groups, Catholic housewives' organizations generally held themselves aloof from the Protestant-dominated nondenominational associations. But the concerns and programs that Catholic housewives' groups pursued were, generally speaking, identical to those of their Protestant counterparts.[34] Just like their Protestant counterparts, middle-strata Catholic women had to maintain *standesgemässige* households, and the strategies they used to pursue this end do not seem to have differed appreciably. As Jonathan Sperber notes, Catholics were underrepresented among the German bourgeoisie, and thus formed a smaller minority among that class than in other social groups, one that was influenced by the Protestant majority in some respects. Bourgeois Catholics were more likely to be secularized and were less influenced by the religious revival among lay Catholics during

[32] Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*, 63–70 and 80–2.
[33] Ibid., 82.
[34] For the identical programs and concerns pursued by bourgeois Protestant and Catholic housewives' groups in Hanover, e.g., during both the Imperial and Weimar periods, see Reagin, *A German Women's Movement*, 60–5 and also Chapter 3.

1850–70 than were other Catholic social groups.[35] Subjected to similar social controls and class standards as their Protestant counterparts, Catholic bourgeois housewives were thus exposed to the same domestic norms.

Although the community of German *Hausfrauen* formally included all German housewives, it was implicitly bourgeois and urban. The model of domesticity espoused by this group could, with a few modifications, transcend religious divisions, but most of it could not be exported across class lines or into farming households in rural areas. This approach to housekeeping had roots in particular strata of German society, but writers and housewives' organizations attempted to promote these norms across regional lines among the German bourgeoisie as a whole, replacing the Babel of cooking and housekeeping styles with a uniform way of approaching household management, at least among the urban bourgeoisie.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, housekeeping was not seen as something to be formally learned in a course, but rather something handed down within families and neighborhoods from older to younger women (e.g., from Aunt Lina or Frau Dr. B.). Styles of housekeeping and cooking were intrinsically local and familial. Standards and judgments regarding women's housekeeping were set locally, varied regionally, and were evaluated within the context of particular households. In rural areas, for example, housework was only one part of a woman's broader job description, and she might be respected locally much more for the consistent quality of the butter she made and sold, than for the whiteness of her linens.

In the process of building the imagined community of *Hausfrauen*, authors and leaders of housewives' organizations were remaking and expanding that part of the older job description that had consisted of housework, even as the self-provisioning and agricultural work that many of their grandmothers had done now dropped out of the urban housewife's job description. At the same time, leaders of housewives' groups were trying to construct uniform standards and schedules that would apply across middle-strata households. They thus established a job description for the *Deutsche Hausfrau*: writers articulated standardized norms, for example, regarding how often curtains should

[35] Sperber, *Popular Catholicism*, 281–2.

be washed, and how many times they should be rinsed during washing (ten times, according to Mrs. Sidgwick).[36] The popularity of such publications reflected and furthered the growth of a group of self-identified *Hausfrauen*.

The creation of this imagined community was crucial to the creation and maintenance of bourgeois class identity and class boundaries. As in other Western cultures of this period, specific aspects of housekeeping became markers of class: floors and furniture that housewives (or their servants) frequently scrubbed and polished; clothes (particularly aprons) that were clean, starched and ironed; fixed mealtimes and schedules for family members (especially children); and household management that allowed a family to live within its means and put aside regular savings.[37] This style of housekeeping helped build the "moral community" of the bourgeoisie, bridging income differences within the bourgeoisie and enforcing class boundaries between the middle strata and the working poor. But the bourgeoisie also deployed these standards against working-class housewives. During the late nineteenth century, bourgeois social workers, home economists, and club women increasingly tried to intervene in working-class households and remake poorer housewives through inspection, domestic science training, and the granting or withholding of aid in accordance with these standards of household management.[38]

Thrift – regardless of the cost in labor – was one of the lynchpins of the ideal style of household management articulated in German advice literature and by housewives' organizations in both their missionary efforts vis-à-vis working-class housewives, and in publications directed toward women of their own class. Bourgeois female writers urged the

[36] For the attempt to establish uniform schedules, see Bärbel Kuhn, "Und herrschet weise im häuslichen Kreise."

[37] For the ways that bourgeois housekeeping functioned to define class in other nations, see the works cited in note 3. See also Rendall, *Women in an Industrializing Society*, 44ff; Susan Strasser, *Never Done. A History of American Housework* (New York: Patheon Books, 1982).

[38] For German bourgeois women's attempts to remake working-class housewives in their own image, see Reagin, *A German Women's Movement*, 43–98 and Ute Frevert, "Fürsorgliche Belagerung. Hygienebewegung und Arbeiterfrauen im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 11 (1985); see also Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender. Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 300–7.

Hausfrau to recycle or make things herself, even when she could purchase commercial substitutes at modest prices. When doing the wash, she should take the time to brew her own batch of starch out of potato peelings or stockpiled candle stubs every week. Even after ready-made tailored suits for men could be easily purchased, some women still sewed their husbands' suits themselves, and almost all bourgeois women produced their own and their children's daily wardrobes well past 1945, hiring a seamstress only occasionally to make the "best" outfits. Indeed, before she married, a bourgeois woman was expected to sew sufficient amounts of table and bed linens, and underclothes to last her entire married life. Long after canned produce was on store shelves, authors expected that housewives would spend weeks every summer and fall, putting up fruits and vegetables for the winter.[39] Germans saved scraps of leftover food to make slop for animals (as elsewhere), but German manuals on housekeeping went further, recommending that the first bucket of water used in washing dishes also be given afterward to animals (if the small-town housewife kept chickens or pets), as it might also contain small bits of food.[40]

In many families, necessity dictated thrift. Civil servants, in particular, earned very little and had to live within their means. At the same time, they had to keep house in a style that was "appropriate to one's station" (*standesgemäss*) and scrape together school fees for their sons and dowries for daughters; they often squeezed the surplus for this out of the food budget.[41] But thrift had long been perceived as a key "bourgeois virtue," also practiced by many of those who could afford to live more expansively. Historian Percy Ernst Schramm, who came from a prosperous Hamburg attorney's family (his father was later elected

[39] Produce preserved at home was also valued because it was seen as being more wholesome, but thrift was an important additional motive. See Kuhn, "Und herrschet weise," 257–60; Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*, 118–21; and Bluth, *Der Hausfrau gewidmet*, 78, who comments that "home and cooking advice books were, above everything else, books on how to save money."

[40] See Seminar der Koch- und Haushaltungsschule "Hedwig Heyl," *Lehrgang des Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Hauses II* (Berlin: Carl Habel Verlag, 1905), 89.

[41] Lower-level civil servants' families often lived in extremely straightened circumstances. Their wives might attempt to supplement the family's income by taking in boarders or doing sewing at home, but they risked official reprimands for their husbands if the wife's income-producing activities became too public. See Beuys, *Familienleben*, 446.

mayor during the 1920s) recalled in his memoirs his astonishment, as a child, upon accidentally discovering that his grandfather put butter on his *Zwiebäcke* at breakfast. "We had been told at home that whoever did this, would be put in prison. Indeed, Aunt Emmy went even one step further: she maintained that whoever put marmalade on top of butter was wasteful, and such behavior would lead inexorably to hell!"[42] Hans Fallada, born in 1893 to the family of a well-off higher civil servant (a *Reichsgerichtsrat*) wrote later that his Aunt Gustchen (admired in the family for her thrift) contrived to cook her breakfast egg in the water that was boiling for the morning tea.[43] Family entertainment among the bourgeoisie tended to consist of activities that cost little or nothing: a walk in the park after Sunday dinner; reading aloud to family members in the evening; and making music together on the piano or recorder (mothers who played could teach the children and thus save the cost of music teachers' fees). Visiting English or American authors sometimes commented that the German bourgeois families they observed lived more simply, and spent less on food and clothing, than their English-speaking counterparts.[44]

All expenditures were supposed to be meticulously recorded in housekeeping account books. This meant additional work, but also that husbands could inspect each woman's thrift (or lack of it). In working-class or lower-middle-class families, such economies were often necessary, but writers presented extreme thrift as a virtue for every German housewife, no matter how prosperous. The trade-off was clear: thrift almost always entailed additional labor on the part of women.[45] As one 1910 household advice manual urged, "never spend money on things which you can make or grow yourself. Only purchase what is absolutely necessary."[46] It is impossible to know exactly how many bourgeois women followed this advice, but it is indisputable that many women did, as historians who have done oral histories on the

[42] Quoted in ibid., 440–1. For the economic position of civil servants, by contrast, see ibid., 439 and Henning, *Das westdeutsche Bürgertum*, 487–90 and 274–5.

[43] Quoted in Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*, 132.

[44] See Brace, *Home Life in* Germany and also Ida A. R. Wylie, *The Germans*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1911), 269–78.

[45] See Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 29–30.

[46] Quoted in Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*, 118.

cohort of housewives born during the Wilhelmine period (and subsequent cohorts) have noted.[47]

Not merely the quest to save money, but also the high standards of cleanliness promoted by housewives' publications and organizations also resulted in labor-intensive housework. Late-nineteenth-century advice literature presented housewives with detailed schedules for cleaning, with days set aside each week and month for washing, ironing, and so forth. Manuals suggested washing floors daily and polishing the stove after every use. A housewife should empty out and clean all shelves and cabinets at least once every eight days. The procedure given by Davidis for the daily cleaning of the bedroom, far too lengthy to reprint here, required that the woman cleaning wear spotless white cotton gloves, an apron, and slippers (to keep from contaminating the room). If followed to the letter, this approach would have rendered the room almost sterile.[48]

She should also take down curtains and wash them every three months, put them through ten separate rinses, and starch and iron them before they were rehung, now "sparkling white" again, because extremely clean curtains were something that were seen and noticed by neighbors.[49] Descriptions of properly cleaned curtains in such literature, similar to other linens, always noted that they should be "snow white" or "sparkling white." Indeed, there are adjectives for white (e.g., *blühendweiss*) that are challenging to translate. German housewives seem to have had as many adjectives for *white* in regards to cleaning, as Eskimos are popularly (and erroneously) believed to have for snow.

The kitchen and the linen cabinet in particular were depicted as sites where a housewife's cleanliness, diligence, skills, and order were on display. The kitchen should be spotless and gleaming after every meal; if any chance visitors glanced into it, they should see a shining stove,

[47] See Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik* and Kuhn, *Haus-Frauen-Arbeit*.

[48] The instructions are reprinted in Marenk and Framke, *Beruf der Jungfrau*, 77.

[49] Extremely high standards for cleanliness, along with a constant round of cleaning, are discussed in Kuhn, "Und herrschet weise," 244–52; Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*, 113–18; Bluth, *Der Hausfrau gewidmet*, 75–8. Interviews with housewives done by Kuhn in *Haus-Frauen-Arbeit*, 69, include the details of the elaborate cleaning procedures women followed for curtain cleaning.

floor, and pans. The linen cabinet containing the trousseau should be full of snow white linens: pressed and precisely stacked. Mrs. Sidgwick described the inside of the linen cabinet of a German acquaintance of hers, a professor's wife, whom Sidgwick depicted as typical in this regard:

> [She] threw back both doors of an immense cupboard occupying the longest wall in the room.... [F]or their happiness they possessed all this linen: shelf upon shelf, pile upon pile of linen, exactly ordered, [and] tied with lemon coloured ribbons.[50]

The linen cabinet thus simultaneously demonstrated order and cleanliness, while reminding the viewer of the Wilhemine housewife's hard work and affluence, as measured by the amount of linens and by how white they were. Much of the work a housewife did, after all, was invisible to the community (e.g., meals and picking up, which had to be done again and again). But the laundry, which included the linens, and the whiteness of her wash was one area in which a woman could produce something that really could be shown off to visitors and neighbors. As one housewife commented, when a woman hung out laundry to dry, or set out bleached and ironed linens for guests to see, "one could really judge how hard-working a housewife was by looking at her linens." The weekly laundry, neatly mended, spotless, and hung out in well-organized rows (it was supposed to be sorted and hung by category and size) thus was seen as public proof of a housewife's diligence, thriftiness, sense of order, degree of domestic skill, and overall capability.[51]

Besides the daily round of sweeping, straightening, dusting, polishing, and cooking, at least once a week (often Fridays), women had a special cleaning day when floors were waxed and special chores done. Saturday mornings were also days when extra cleaning was done: "Saturday was usually cleaning day," one woman who grew up in Southern Germany before World War I later recalled, "a woman who

[50] Sidgwick, *Home Life in Germany*, 135–6. For an additional discussion of the symbolic importance of "snow white" linens, see Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*.

[51] Quote taken from the interviews done with early-twentieth-century housewives in Kuhn, *Haus-Frauen-Arbeit*, 31.

didn't have her house all sparkling and polished by early Saturday afternoon, was considered lazy and slow."[52]

On Saturday afternoons, housewives would prepare "better" weekend foods and often bake a cake for Sunday afternoon. The Sunday coffee and cake would be served later, after the main midday meal, which often featured the "Sunday roast" or other more expensive meat entree. The overall menu for the week was to be planned on the woman's *Küchenzettel* (a small list or chart that contained a week's meal plan), which could help her track the various ingredients she needed to purchase and stay within budget.[53]

Other models of housekeeping, which might have stressed fine cooking or offered a schedule that allocated a greater amount of time to be spent with children (or even more time for community involvement or hobbies), were thus eclipsed.[54] Historians of American domesticity point to a somewhat different distribution of the housewife's workload. Phyllis Palmer, for example, argues that by the mid-nineteenth century, American housewives no longer produced goods as much as they had in earlier generations. Instead, she concludes, much of the cleaning and cooking was left to servants, as the housewife was expected to spend much of her time overseeing the household's shopping and consumption, supervising her children's moral and intellectual development, assuring her husband's comfort, maintaining the family's network of social connections, and engaging in charitable and community welfare work. Some American advice books even recommended prioritizing romance and companionship within the marriage, even if it meant leaving the dinner dishes unwashed for the evening!

That is a substantially different model than the "job description" for German housewives contained in the advice literature examined. Even in families with relatively modest incomes among the middle strata, it was assumed that the *Hausfrau* would hire low-paid "help" to watch the children while she oversaw (and did much of) the cleaning

[52] Ibid., 66.

[53] The recipes in advice literature and ingredients lists in model *Küchenzettel* often listed prices for each ingredient, so the housewife could calculate the cost of each dish. See Wiedemann, *Herrin Im Hause*, 29.

[54] See Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt*, 5–6 and 36–8.

and cooking.[55] The pressure to clean was undoubtedly linked to rising standards for personal and household cleanliness (e.g., how often bed sheets had to be changed). Overall, as homes became somewhat larger in some classes and filled with more objects, the amount of time required for cleaning also rose.[56]

The imperative to maintain a "spotless" table and household indeed sometimes trumped other considerations, such as practicality. Advice literature often denounced *Wachstücher* (waxed table coverings, forerunners to today's vinyl table cloths that could be easily wiped clean). Bourgeois housewives held them in low regard precisely because of their convenience. One 1900 housekeeping manual disparagingly remarked that "nothing leads so easily to uncleanliness and carelessness at mealtimes as these convenient waxed tablecloths, which can be simply wiped off." A "sparkling" white tablecloth, the author concluded, would train family members to be clean.[57] *Convenience* was thus literally a dirty word. Advice manual writers acknowledged, however, that the frequent bleaching and bluing required in order to maintain a "snow white" appearance was damaging to the fabric, shortening its life. The alternative – allowing linens to become slightly yellowed or dingy over time – simply did not enter the discussion.[58]

Various media of popular culture promoted the norms of snow white cleanliness, relentless thrift, and the maintenance of good household

[55] For an emphasis on extreme cleanliness as a marker of upward mobility (common in Western cultures in this period), see Kuhn, "Und herrschet weise"; and Robert Frost, "Machine Liberation: Inventing Housewives and Home Appliances in Interwar France," *French Historical Studies* 18 (1993): 115.

[56] The rise in standards for cleanliness and the increased amount of time spent cleaning during the nineteenth century have been noted by historians who have studied housewifery in a number of Western nations. For this development in Ireland, see Joanna Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery. Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland 1890–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 206–35; for the United States, see Boydston, *Home and Work* and Strasser, *Never Done*; for Britain, see Caroline Davidson, *A Woman's Work is Never Done. A History of Housework in the British Isles, 1650–1950* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1982) and Jane Rendall, *Women in an Industrializing Society*, 89; for France, see Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Classes*.

[57] Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause*, 77.

[58] Ibid., 117. During World War II, when soap, bleach, etc. were in short supply (as was new fabric), officials in the housekeeping division of the National Socialist *Deutsches Frauenwerk* debated whether to urge housewives to omit bleaching in order to spare the fabric. They concluded, however, that housewives would never accept such advice and that dingy linens would lead to bad morale.

order. Sometimes writers presented these characteristics as specifically "German" domestic virtues. Excerpts from treatises by eighteenth-century authors such as Schiller, Goethe, and Campe (which had been originally written for a narrower eighteenth-century audience of "the educated") urging that young women be trained to order, cleanliness, and thrift, were now widely reprinted in household advice manuals and cookbooks.[59] Late-nineteenth-century housewives' magazines and books also frequently quoted and excerpted the section of Schiller's 1800 poem, "The Song of the Bell" (enormously popular among the bourgeoisie, and reprinted in numerous school textbooks and anthologies during the nineteenth century) that listed the duties of the housewife. Schiller urged the housewife

> to rule wisely, in the domestic circle, and teach the daughters, and guard the sons, and employ without ceasing, your industrious hands, to increase the [family's] prosperity, with a sense for order.... And collect in a clean polished cabinet, the gleaming wools, the snow white linens....[60]

Women also embroidered couplets from Schiller's poem, along with other sayings promoting these "domestic virtues," on framed wall-hangings and *Überhandtücher* (literally: "towels that hang on top"). These last were pressed, decorative linens with embroidered sayings,

[59] For eighteen examples of treatises on sex roles (*Geschlechtscharakter*) that stress the domestic "bourgeois" virtues that later characterized housewives' advice literature, see Paul Münch, *Ordnung, Fleiss, und Sparsamkeit. Texte und Dokumente zur Entstehung der "bürgerlichen Tugenden"* (Munich: DTV, 1984), 210–16, 260–71, and 341–3. Münch argues that "order, industry, and thrift, which are closely linked to the ideals of cleanliness and purity, form the center of the... 'bourgeois' book of virtues. They have also long determined the self-image of Germans, and their stereotypes of foreigners in a peculiar fashion." For the development of gender roles and sexual stereotypes during the Enlightenment more generally, see Karin Hausen, "Family and Role Division: The Polarization of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth Century – An Aspect of the Disassociation of Work and Family Life," in Richard Evans and W. R. Lee, eds., *The German Family* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 51–83. For the popularization of these Enlightenment authors in nineteenth-century household advice manuals, see Weismann, *Froh erfülle deine Pflicht*, 215–17. For the increasing emphasis on bodily cleanliness among the German bourgeoisie during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see Manuel Frey, *Der reinliche Bürger. Entstehung und Verbreitung bürgerlicher Tugenden in Deutschland, 1760–1860* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1997).

[60] "The Song of the Bell" (*das Lied der Glocke*) is reprinted in Friedrich Schiller, *Gedichte/Schiller* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1980), 244. This translation and all others in this book, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

which covered and concealed slightly rumpled dishtowels – not even a dishtowel could be seen in a wrinkled condition – or were used to conceal corners containing brooms and mops, sewing machines, bread baskets, ironing boards, laundry baskets, table tops, and even water facets. These textiles gained popularity after 1870, first among the upper-middle-class and then spreading downward. They were common in working-class homes by 1914 and had indeed become a marker of the lower-middle and working class by the 1920s (as they fell out of fashion among wealthier families). Many of these linens bore the same cliché of "home, sweet home" found in the English-speaking world (e.g., *Eigner Herd ist Goldes wert* and *Trautes Heim, Glück allein*), while others celebrated the "domestic virtues" of order, thrift, and cleanliness. Popular examples included *Halte Ordnung, liebe sie. Ordnung spart dir Zeit und Müh'; Reinlichkeit der Küche Zierde*; and *Sauberkeit ziert.*[61] By the Wilhemine period, some of these embroidered decorations explicitly claimed these domestic virtues as the particular provenance of the German *Hausfrau*. A typical example was an embroidery pattern for a linen cabinet decoration from 1913 that proclaimed:

> [S]weet smelling, soft, and snow white, protected lies herein, the most beautiful linens, rewarding the industry of the faithful hands of the German housewife – her ornament and glory![62]

The typical bourgeois home was thus filled by the late nineteenth century with objects preaching cleanliness, order, and thrift, sometimes claiming these virtues for German women especially. The linen cabinet in particular seems to have become a national domestic symbol in trivial forms of popular culture.

Holidays were also an important part of domesticity. Christmas – celebrated with a variety of rituals, practices, and symbols – became a crucial part of domestic life (as opposed to being primarily a religious holiday) among the German bourgeoisie during the nineteenth

[61] These sayings, translated in order, are: "One's own hearth is worth gold," "Dear home, source of all happiness," "Keep order, love it. Order saves you time and effort," "Purity is the kitchen's decoration," and "Cleanliness is an ornament."

[62] Quoted in Weismann, *Froh erfülle deine Pflicht*, 220. Weismann's collection of sayings embroidered on textiles includes a number of other references praising the "German housewife." Some editions of Davidis offered similar embroidery patterns.

century.[63] Christmas trees began to appear in well-off urban homes in the late eighteenth century, and had become common in bourgeois homes across Germany a century later. Poorer and rural Germans did not adopt these practices until the twentieth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, the tree was laden with wax candles, gilded nuts, glass balls, flowers and ribbons, and marzipan and chocolates, while the parlor and other "public" rooms were decorated with a growing variety of holiday objects. On Christmas Eve, the tree's candles were lit; the household's children were allowed to enter the room where the tree stood; and the family exchanged gifts, sang songs, or listened to the children recite poems. Elaborate meals with special holiday dishes also accompanied the holiday.

These new Christmas practices were supported and spread by the same structural shifts that had made possible the broader culture of bourgeois domesticity of which Christmas was such an important part: the rise of print culture, which made possible elaborate popular "Christmas books" with their songs, poems, and stories; the growth of consumer culture, which fostered the many products associated with the holiday; the expansion of the bourgeoisie; and the sentimental, even sacralized notions of the home and family life that Christmas reinforced.[64] This version of Christmas was one of the most successful "invented traditions" of the century. Ultimately, the tree and many of the associated practices spread from Germany throughout the English-speaking world.

Christmas was also successful as a German national holiday. By 1900, contemporaries spoke of a "German Christmas," and widely shared the belief that Christmas was better celebrated in Germany than anywhere else, as its values were particularly consonant with German national character. Visiting English and American authors were often persuaded to share this view, even as they publicized and

[63] I am indebted here to the analysis of how Christmas observance became interwoven with German national identity offered in Joseph Perry, "The Private Life of the Nation: Christmas and the Invention of Modern Germany" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001). See also Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Das Weihnachtsfest: Eine Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte der Weihnachtszeit* (Munich: C. J. Buchner, 1987); and Klaus-Dieter Dobat, "O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum. . . ." "Wie der Siegeszug eines deutschen Weihnachtssymbols begann," *Damals* 21 (1989): 1093–101.

[64] See Perry, "Private Life of the Nation," 29–41.

promoted this version of the Christmas celebration in their own countries. Ida Wylie, an Englishwoman who lived in Karlsruhe for six years, later wrote that "Germany without Christmas – or better – Christmas without Germany! For me the one state is as unthinkable as the other... there is no country in the world... where Christmas is so intensely 'Christmasy,' as in the Fatherland."[65] Indeed, Christmas was able to become *the* national holiday, because it was far more attractive and inclusive than Sedan Day (which was observed primarily among the Protestant bourgeoisie), or other holidays that tried and failed to cement a national community. Even German Jews found the tree and its associated practices hard to resist: more secularized Jewish families might exchange Hanukkah presents under the tree. German Christmas indeed became a holiday in which sentimental domestic customs helped to create a shared feeling of national identity.[66] Scholarly and popular publications spread the (false) belief that German Christmas – particularly the tree and lights – were rooted in pre-Christian "Germanic" tribal customs. In many families, Christmas trees were decorated with small national flags or hung with glass ornaments in the shape of Bismarck's head.[67] Christmas thus succeeded as a national holiday in part because its domestic nature made it an attractive forum for the articulation of national identity.

The bourgeois model of domesticity – how to clean, cook, and celebrate holidays – were acquired not only through advice literature and training in the home and neighborhood, but increasingly in formal domestic science education, starting in the late nineteenth century. Before 1933, educational policy on domestic science varied between different regions, but the national trend toward introducing home economics instruction (both in popular private courses and as a mandatory part of the public school curriculum) was unmistakable. In the decades before World War I, young women from better-off families were often sent to the household of a relative or friend for domestic training, or

[65] Wylie, *The Germans*, 85; Maggie Browne, *Chats About Germany* (London: Cassel and Co., 1884), 18; see the promotion of "German Christmas" by an American author in Brace, *Home Life in Germany*, 221–2; for the popularization of "German Christmas" throughout the English-speaking world in the late nineteenth century, see Perry, "Private Life of the Nation," 30.

[66] Ibid., 22.

[67] Ibid., 82–9; see also Dobat, "O Tannenbaum," 1094–6.

even spent a year at special boarding schools that specialized in home economics for bourgeois girls. Bourgeois women's organizations and employers offered evening courses in the domestic arts, which were often oversubscribed, for working-class women.[68]

After 1900, many provinces and cities began to introduce mandatory courses in cooking, cleaning, infant care, general household management, knitting, and various sorts of sewing. In Munich, for example, an eighth grade was added to girls' schools (the *Volksschule*, which working-class children attended) in 1896, and the additional grade was made mandatory in 1913; much of the curriculum for this year was devoted to various aspects of domestic science. One Bavarian school inspector justified the extra needlework instruction by arguing that "A woman who can mend her clothing, who can keep in use for years every scrap of lining material and every button, is a pearl for the house." Another inspector claimed that the new domestic science courses taught "those virtues that should adorn every housewife: cleanliness and orderliness, thriftiness and industriousness, simplicity and good taste."[69]

Conclusion

By the beginning of the twentieth century, a particular approach to household management and domesticity had reached full flower among the German bourgeoisie. It was primarily urban in its origins and assumptions, but was generally accessible to Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant bourgeois women alike. After 1890, housewives' organizations, public schools, and employers began to promote a simplified version of this model of domesticity among young working-class women. Domestic science education for the lower classes recognized

[68] For the spread of home economics instruction, see Reagin, *A German Women's Movement*, 74–80 and 232–3; see also Schlegel-Matthies, *Im Haus und am Herd*, 222; Katherine D. Kennedy, "Lessons and Learners: Elementary Education in Southern Germany, 1871–1914" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1981), 333–45 and "Domesticity (Hauswirtschaft) in the *Volksschule*: Textbooks and Lessons for Girls, 1890–1914," *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 13 (1991): 5–21; Kerchner, *Beruf und Geschlecht*, 212 ff. Formal instruction in domestic science became increasingly popular in many Western nations after the turn of the century.

[69] The first quote is taken from Kennedy, "Domesticity in the *Volksschule*," 12; the second quote comes from Kennedy, "Lessons and Learners," 345.

that working-class housewives couldn't afford all the accoutrements of a bourgeois household, certainly, but still attempted to instill the norms of domestic cleanliness, order, and thrift across class lines using courses, advice literature, the work of housewives' organizations, and the more informal mechanisms of peer pressure and social control.

Certain idealized practices, symbols, and objects had come to represent this vision of bourgeois domesticity. Among them were the celebration of "German Christmas"; "snow white" linens and curtains; the Sunday cake and roast; and orderly household accounts and the *Küchenzettel*, which documented household thrift. All these symbols were outgrowths of the practices dominant among the Wilhelmine bourgeoisie. But what was merely bourgeois at home became German abroad, when such practices were placed into a comparative context. And such everyday objects and approaches to household management would become key symbols in discussions of German national character. In the discourse on national character, the ways in which German national identity was rooted in the household management strategies of the bourgeois private sphere would become clear: cleanliness was next to Germanness.

2

Domesticity and German National Character

Polish management.
It looks like the Hottentots live here.

Popular sayings, used to describe sloppiness or chaos, as in household management

The preservation of Germanness demands a clean home. The drive to scrub, innate in our *Volk*, has a moral and national value."

Käthe Schirmacher, a leading conservative German feminist, 1917

Clara Brockmann, a journalist and lecturer, went to German Southwest Africa for a lengthy visit during 1907–9, to study the lives of German women in the colony. After returning to Germany, Brockmann wrote and lectured widely about the need for more German women in German Southwest Africa. More women were needed in German colonies, she argued in a 1910 publication, because without their homemaking skills, newly settled farms would not become true German homes:

[W]ithout the presence of a *Hausfrau* . . . a [colonial] farm cannot become *heimisch*, because only [her presence] secures German ways and customs, and a German family life. . . . [I knew a bachelor farmer in Southwest Africa] whose animals throve but whose house and rooms were in terribly neglected condition. . . . [T]he farmer's study presented a picture of impressive disorder. . . . [T]he desk had not been dusted for six months. . . . [After his bride arrived from Germany] the unkempt dwelling was transformed into an inviting

rural home. In the kitchen and courtyard everything was well-organized... the rooms now resembled the comfortable abodes of the homeland.[1]

Brockmann was drawing upon an understanding of what "German" ways and life-styles included, which was widely shared by her bourgeois contemporaries by the turn of the century. It was an understanding of Germanness that had developed alongside the model of domesticity that it incorporated, a set of assumptions about what it meant to be German that gradually spread among the urban bourgeoisie in the decades after German unification.

Like Italians after their nation's unification, Germans had to be "invented." Legal, national, and cultural definitions of what it meant to be German – which were revisions of earlier notions of Germanness, but now linked to the particular state and boundaries established in 1871 – developed gradually during the decades before World War I. The new nation had to create laws that established criteria for citizenship, decide whether or how to organize national institutions (e.g., a centralized railroad or postal system), and struggle to establish symbols for the German nation (e.g., a flag, national anthem, or national holiday). As we have seen, Imperial Germany never did designate an official national holiday or anthem, and only adopted a national flag in 1892. Even the postal and diplomatic systems were not merged before 1918; only in Weimar Germany were "German" (instead of Prussian or Saxon) stamps introduced.[2]

Although the unification of national institutions and establishment of national symbols was halting and incomplete, preexisting regional loyalties were gradually complemented by or even overshadowed (in most areas of Germany) by a growing allegiance to Germany as a whole, as a shared German national identity was consolidated before 1914. German national identity drew heavily upon preexisting regional and confessional identities, and was anchored in the long-shared

[1] Clara Brockmann, *Die deutsche Frau in Südwestafrika. Ein Beitrag zur Frauenfrage in unseren Kolonien* (Berlin, 1910), 3–6.

[2] For the difficulties and delays in establishing a national holiday and unified postal, railroad, diplomatic systems, etc. see Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor* and Green, *Fatherlands*; for the debates over establishing criteria for German citizenship in the new nation, see Howard Sargent, "Diasporic Citizens: The Persistent Problem of Germans Abroad in German Citizenship Law, 1815–2000," in O'Donnell, *The Heimat Abroad*.

sense – which went back at least to the eighteenth century – that the inhabitants of all the German states shared an overarching culture. At the same time, the coalescing sense of Imperial German national identity was implicitly challenged by competing or contradictory visions of what it meant to be German. German national identity was still a work in progress during the Imperial period (and beyond), as the Protestant bourgeoisie struggled to assert its vision of Germanness in opposition to competing understandings, which arose across the divides of class, religion, and region.[3]

Millions of ethnic Germans, for example, still lived throughout Central and Eastern Europe, usually in states where they felt perfectly "at home" (and thus did not necessarily look toward Imperial Germany as their "natural" allegiance).[4] Within Germany, conservative nationalists and anti-Semites increasingly argued that the only "real" Germans were those who shared ethnic German ancestry. Simultaneously, members of some religious minority groups (e.g., German Jews or German Catholics) certainly considered themselves to be "good Germans," but also developed their own diverse understandings of the national community. After 1890, settlers who immigrated to Germany's new colonies also asserted their place within an expanded, imperial nation.[5] Conflicting and competing visions or definitions of the German national community were possible because – like all nations – it was a community that was at least partly imagined. Because this national bonding was generated through the imagination, conflicting or minority interpretations of what it meant to be German were certainly possible.

[3] For a discussion of recent work on the development of German national identity during the nineteenth century, including competing understandings of Germanness, see my review essay, "Recent Work on German National Identity," 245–71.

[4] For the identities and allegiances of ethnic Germans in the Hapsburg Empire, see Pieter Judson, "Inventing Germans: Class, Nationality and Colonial Fantasy at the Margins of the Hapsburg Monarch," *Social Analysis* 33 (1993): 47–67; and "Frontiers, Islands, Forests, Stones: Mapping the Geography of a German Identity in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848–1900," in Patricia Yaeger, ed., *The Geography of Identity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 382–406.

[5] For a discussion of the place of German colonists in the national community, see Krista O'Donnell, "Home, Nation, Empire: Domestic Germanness and Colonial Citizenship" in O'Donnell, *The Heimat Abroad*. For the variations of German identity developed by members of different religious confessions, see Helmut Walser Smith, ed., *Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Germany, 1880–1914*.

3

The Politicization of Housework

Even in autumn, the fruit of our homeland, the apple, is unreasonably neglected [by housewives] and in its place many sorts of [foreign] oranges are consumed in astonishing quantities.

From a 1927 article in The German Housewife

By the turn of the century, a particular approach to housekeeping, holidays, and domesticity had become an integral part of how Germans saw themselves and others. But the promotion of domesticity or particular practices of housekeeping was of little interest to the state before 1914, except for the spread of domestic science instruction in the public schools. And although housewives had begun to organize themselves during the late nineteenth century, forming quite large associations in some cities, housewives' organizations were not politicized in any partisan sense. The coming of World War I changed this – as it did every other aspect of social life – and drew the state's attention to women's housekeeping practices and their importance to the nation. Housework and domesticity become entangled with the national interest, which accelerated the organization of bourgeois housewives, and boosted their claims to being a *Beruf*, a formal profession. Along with the expansion of bourgeois housewives' organizations came their explicit politicization after 1918, as housewives' associations gained influence in right-wing Weimar political parties.

This chapter turns from the analysis of how national identity was articulated using the practices and symbols of domesticity in various

genres and social venues before 1914, to an examination of how housewives were mobilized on behalf of the nation after 1914, and their daily housekeeping thus politicized both during and after the war. Many of the traits established in German public discussions before 1914 about their own and others' domesticity – especially stereotypes about German housewives' thrifty and labor-intensive approaches to housekeeping – were on display in the political campaigns mounted by German housewives during the Weimar period. But now these domestic practices were put increasingly into service of nationalist causes and interest groups.

At the same time, changes in household technology during the 1920s entered the discussion about what styles of domesticity were appropriate for Germany, and became the focus of much of the work of housewives' groups. The political developments of the Weimar period, and material interests of bourgeois leaders of German housewives' associations, simultaneously drew housewives' organizations steadily toward the right. Thus, the dual thrust of Weimar housewives' groups was to modernize and "professionalize" housework, while also mobilizing housewives for goals beloved of the right wing. By the end of Weimar, the major housewives' leagues were strongly allied with right-wing, nationalist parties, and their leaders pursued a campaign of economic nationalism and agitation against Weimar's parliamentary system, while they also worked to modernize and rationalize the housewife's role.

German Households under Siege

The World War I, which transformed German society and deeply affected private life, provided the impetus for the enormous expansion of housewives' organizations, and thus set the stage for the politicization of housework. The war's demands on the German "home front" indeed led to the rapid expansion not only of housewives' groups, but of the German women's movement across the board. Women's organizations stepped in to fill a vacuum because the German government had not undertaken the kind of detailed planning for the civilian economy required for a long war.

The German army had based its overall planning on the premise of a fast, overwhelming attack on France, similar to its successful strategy

during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870–1. The German general staff planned to force the surrender of Belgium and France and then to transport most of its forces rapidly to the Eastern Front to confront the Russian army (which faced some delays in mobilization). Of course, the master plan failed: Germany did not knock France out of the war, and was instead committed to a very long two-front war. But the government had not given much thought to the effect that a drawn-out war would have on civilians, nor created any schedules for the mobilization of the domestic economy.

The immediate result was chaos, when millions of households lost their chief "breadwinners" to the military mobilization. The Allies imposed a fairly complete naval blockade of German ports soon thereafter, which threw still more families into poverty, as the shortage of raw materials and the conversion of the industrial sector to wartime production led to the closure of factories and workshops. The textile industries (which employed a heavily female workforce) were particularly hard hit.

Because of the shortage of materials and foodstuffs, the German government introduced rationing and pursued an unsuccessful policy of autarky. The overall goal was to make Germany – which, with its large population, had been dependent on substantial food imports for decades – self-sufficient in terms of the production of food and raw materials. Autarky proved to be impossible to sustain, however. Germany lacked sufficient sources of fertilizer and fodder, for example, to even maintain a prewar level of food production. The nation also suffered from persistent shortfalls of fats and fuels, along with many raw materials needed for basic consumer goods (e.g., cotton, wool, and leather for clothing). The results for civilians included food shortages, widespread malnutrition, and increased mortality rates in every age group because poor nutrition undermined resistance to disease.[1]

As the war continued, the home front for many women literally ran right through their kitchens. By 1916, many housewives had to devote

[1] For the terrible impact that the war had on civilians' diet and health, see also Anne Roerkohl, *Hungerblockade und Heimatfront* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1991). And for an analysis of the politics of food consumption in World War I, see also Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Politics, Identity, and Food in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

an enormous amount of time and effort simply to keep their household economies functioning. It often took considerable initiative and resourcefulness simply to obtain a minimum of foodstuffs and fuels for heating and cooking. In addition, housewives had to navigate around government attempts to regulate household economies. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, who was one of the leading organizers of the women's movement's attempts to support the war effort, recalled later that the state's attempts to intervene in the domestic economy

> were expanded week by week. In the end, the production and distribution of all materials and objects one needed for daily life were regulated by laws and decrees.... [Civilians' lives were] characterized by confiscation, prohibitions regarding the sale and use of materials, by collection drives, and by attempts to save or produce substitutes for raw materials.[2]

The "war-related materials" on Lüders' list, which the state collected, processed, and recycled, included the most varied detritus of domestic life: coffee grounds, wine corks, women's hair, gramophone records, and fruit pits.

Both potato and grain harvests declined sharply during the war, and the shortage of animal fodder led farmers to feed part of their harvests to their livestock, making cereal shortages worse. Prices for both bread and potatoes (which formed the bulk of the diet for much of the German population) rose steadily, and the government mandated the addition of potato additives and rye grain (which grew better in Germany than did wheat) to wheat flour, to produce what was called *K-bread*, which was touted as the patriotic bread choice. The K in *K-bread* stood for both *Krieg* (war) and *Kartoffel* (potato). Consumers loathed K-bread, with its additives, grayish color, and soggy crust, but poorer shoppers had no other choices; as the war progressed, even K-bread was often in short supply.[3]

Housewives might be issued ration coupons for milk, bread, or potatoes, but this did not mean that they could find stores that had these products in stock. Children, for example, were given ration cards that entitled them to one liter of milk per week (a very modest allotment),

[2] Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, *Das unbekannte Heer. Frauen kämpfen für Deutschland, 1914–1918* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler and Sohn, 1936), 186.

[3] For a detailed discussion of grain shortages and the ingredients of K-bread, see Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 25–30.

but their mothers often could not find any to purchase, as the milk supply available to consumers dropped to 20 percent of its prewar level by 1916.[4] Those who could afford to do so hoarded food and coal, and black markets in food and consumer goods flourished; but black market prices were often so high that only the well-to-do could buy there. The winter of 1917 was popularly known as the "turnip winter" because only turnips seemed to be widely available, and malnutrition became widespread in German cities. Turnips had previously been used as an animal fodder crop, and their diversion to feed urban civilians only worsened the shortage of livestock.

Consumers responded with street riots, strikes in the workplace, and bitter, widespread criticism of the government. Women, who often waited for hours in vain in food lines, were particularly likely to participate in food riots. These, along with related consumer protests undermined the Wilhelmine state, and a heated discussion developed within and outside of government circles about what constituted an equitable distribution of foodstuffs. Such widespread rejection of the state and its authority ultimately prepared the way for political revolution after Germany's defeat in 1918.

Rural or small-town populations had to cope with heavy-handed government regulations, and shortages of crucial supplies of fertilizer, labor, and machinery. Malnutrition wasn't usually as bad in rural areas, however, because people in these areas often had their own gardens or small livestock. But urban consumers found less and less food available in the stores.

Early on during the war, government propaganda attempted to persuade consumers that sufficient food was available, as long as housewives were thrifty with food and no one ate to excess. An often-used slogan assured shoppers that "no one needs to starve, but all must save." Federal and local authorities encouraged women and children to go into the woods, to collect wild fruits and foods such as rose hips, dandelion greens, nuts, thistles, and wild berries to supplement their rations. But even the Imperial War Food Office (*Kriegsernährungsamt*) came to the conclusion that the calories expended in such efforts probably exceeded the nutritional value of what was gathered. The government also organized regular collections of what would have been

[4] Ibid., 162–4.

thrown away as garbage even in the most frugal household before, to replace the raw materials that Germany had previously imported and needed for wartime production. But the constant admonitions to recycle, gather and forage, and contribute to scrap collections did not help a great deal. One agronomist indeed argued that collection and recycling efforts couldn't make a substantial difference, and concluded that the propaganda to do so was yet another symptom of what he called "war time psychosis."[5]

The bourgeois women's movement (in its wartime form, the National Women's Service) became the main vehicle through which the German government tried to mold housewives' shopping and cooking habits to meet the needs of the wartime economy. The National Women's Service distributed recipe booklets and the model menus (*Speisezettel*) published in newspapers to adjust civilians' diets to match available ingredients. These menus stressed foods that would be featured in government discussions throughout the next thirty years: potatoes, dark bread (particularly K-bread), substitutes for bread spreads such as butter and margarine, little meat, and substitutes for cooking with fat, as all sorts of dietary fats were in short supply.

The National Women's Service also helped found housewives' associations in most German cities. With the support and promotion of the National Women's Service and local authorities, the number of chapters of housewives' organizations and their combined membership grew explosively during the war. By the end of the war in 1918, housewives' associations had indeed become some of the largest organizations within the women's movement. The new housewives' groups developed a variety of services to help housewives cope with shortages of every type of product. Housewives' associations offered courses on cooking (to promote *ersatz* ingredients) that taught ordinary women how to cook with substitutes for eggs, butter, flour, and meat. Other classes taught women how to create substitutes for scarce commodities; how to wash clothes and dishes without proper soap; how to repair their own shoes; and (when leather became impossible to obtain) how to plait straw soles for worn-out shoes. In some localities, urban housewives' associations established consumer cooperatives in conjunction

[5] For recycling and foraging propaganda, see Roerkohl, *Hungerblockade*, 51–7 and 179–81.

with rural housewives' organizations.[6] These urban housewives' associations created a national organization, which changed its name after the war to the National League of German Housewives' Associations.[7] Farmer's wives organized into a sister association, the National Federation of Agricultural Housewives' Associations.

Housewives' Associations and Weimar Politics

Housewives' groups had thus been initially created in some areas (or expanded in cities where they already existed) under wartime conditions, with a focus on consumer issues and reshaping household practices to meet state needs. The privations suffered during wartime had highlighted the national importance of housewives – in wartime propaganda, within the women's movement, and in state policy – as those whose shopping and cooking choices could exacerbate or cushion the impact of a crisis. Käthe Schirmacher, a prominent conservative feminist, reflected the new view of housewives when she observed in 1918 that "the world war has taught us that cooking and homemaking are service to the country, defense of the country, and a form of citizenship. Not only the sword is a weapon – in the 'hunger war', the cooking spoon is equally important."[8] Leaders of housewives' groups would

[6] See ibid., 205–10. For a description of housewives' associations in one locality, see Nancy Reagin, *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hanover, 1880–1933*, 187–202. Renate Bridenthal gives a politically sophisticated analysis of rural housewives' organizations in "Organized Rural Women in the Conservative Mobilization of the German Countryside in the Weimar Republic," in Larry E. Jones and James N. Retallack, eds., *Between Reform, Reaction, and Resistance. Studies in the History of German Conservatism from 1789 to 1945* (New York, 1993), 375–405. See also Barbara Guttmann, "'in nie erlebter Leibhaftigkeit zum 'Volke' vereint': Frauenbewegung und Nationalismus im Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Frauen und Nation*, 204–13.

[7] The National League was largely Protestant and almost entirely bourgeois. For an analysis of the league during the Weimar period, see Renate Bridenthal, "'Professional Housewives': Stepsisters of the Women's Movement," 153–73. See also Kirsten Schlegel-Matthies, *"Im Haus und am Herd." Der Wandel des Hausfrauenbildes und der Hausarbeit 1880–1930*, 191–228. Working-class housewives' organizations were established in only two cities because the Social Democrats rejected the idea of creating a separate housewives' organization within the labor movement. Most socialist housewives' activism was expressed within the labor movement's very successful chain of consumer cooperatives. See Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik*, 133–48.

[8] Käthe Schirmacher, *Völkische Frauendienstpflicht* (Charlottenberg: Augustin and Co., 1917), 6, quoted in Raffael Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berg, 2004).

repeatedly invoke the metaphor of the cooking spoon as a "women's weapon" for the nation after 1918.

Housewives' associations were to a certain extent the wartime offspring of the bourgeois women's movement, and they continued to grow, while remaining affiliated with the women's movement through 1932. By 1922, the urban housewives' league had more than two hundred and fifty thousand members, and its sister organization, the rural housewives' league, reached one hundred thousand members by the late 1920s. The steady growth of the urban and rural housewives' organizations meant that by 1929, they were the first and third largest associations within the umbrella league of the bourgeois women's movement. [9] But both housewives' leagues soon found other political allies.

Finally, the German Catholic Women's League created an affiliate group for housewives during the war, the smaller Catholic Housewives' Union. In many respects, the Catholic Housewives' Union pursued almost exactly the same policies as the urban National League of German Housewives' Associations. The main difference seemed to be in the two groups' political affiliations. While the largely Protestant National League of German Housewives' Associations (e.g., the rural housewives' league) was closely linked to the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (DNVP) and *Deutsche Volkspartei* (DVP), the Catholic Housewives' Union strongly supported the Catholic Center Party.

The fact that Catholic housewives chose to organize themselves separately speaks to the ways that the larger Weimar parties often chose to organize their own separate constituencies and not to any meaningful differences in Weimar bourgeois Catholic and Protestant housewives' approaches to household management. Certainly, there was nothing to choose between the two groups in their economic protectionism, and their interest in "rationalizing" and modernizing housework. The Catholic group's publications even promoted the same streamlined vision of "modern," rational house décor. The photos of "ideal" homes

[9] For membership figures for these groups, and the relative size of the housewives' groups within the umbrella League of German Women's Associations, see Bridenthal, "Organized Rural Women," 390; "Class Struggle Around the Hearth," 246; and Hiltraud Schmidt-Waldherr, *Emanzipation durch Professionalisierung? Politische Strategien und Konflikte innerhalb der bürgerlichen Frauenbewegung während der Weimarer Republik und die Reaktion des bürgerlichen Antifeminismus und des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Materialis, 1987), 176–7.

and advice regarding home décor offered in its publications didn't even include the small religious statues and framed prints found in many Catholic homes during the early twentieth century. Indeed, the leaders of the ostensibly nonconfessional National League of Housewives' Associations often complained bitterly when their Catholic counterparts were given a seat alongside the urban housewives' group on government advisory committees. The National League argued that it represented *all* German housewives, and that the identical policies pursued by the Catholic group meant that a separate representative from their group was unnecessary. But the Catholic Center Party ensured in many regions that its housewives' affiliate group continued to be represented in such forums.

The National Federation of Agricultural Housewives' Associations, however, defined itself rather differently than its Catholic and urban housewives' counterparts. Most of its member organizations had been founded just before or during the war as producer cooperatives, and the rural league as a whole continued to define itself largely as an association of agricultural producers, and not homemakers, throughout the Weimar period. Like the urban housewives' groups, however, the rural league supported economic protectionism and was affiliated with the DNVP.

From their inceptions, therefore, all three housewives' leagues had links (which became stronger over time) to the world of conservative partisan politics. The war had led to rapid growth of all conservative women's organizations, promoted closer links and networks among such nationalist women's groups, and resulted in close links between conservative women's associations and their male counterparts.[10] Rural housewives' associations had been loosely affiliated with the right-wing agrarian pressure group *Bund der Landwirte* before 1914 (some of the housewives' groups' leaders were married to right-wing agrarian activists). In 1921, the Agricultural Housewives' Associations league formally joined the agrarian league's successor organization, the *Reichslandbund*. Indeed, in many rural areas, rural housewives' groups came to be perceived as female auxiliaries to the *Reichslandbund*. The *Reichslandbund* offered the Agricultural Housewives' Associations league office space, funding, and political support in winning government recognition and subsidies. In return, rural housewives' associations supported the *Reichslandbund's* antirepublican agenda and worked to elect nationalist "black-red-white" candidates in the 1924 and 1925 elections.[11] The Agricultural Housewives' Associations league was also closely linked to the DNVP: a party on the right wing of the Weimar political spectrum – consistently hostile to the nation's parliamentary system and to the center and left parties that founded the Weimar Republic – that grew steadily stronger in the late Weimar period. Many of the rural housewives' leaders (e.g., Elisabet Boehm and Countess Margarethe v. Keyserlingk) also sat on the DNVP's women's committee (indeed, Elisabet Boehm, a strong anti-Semite, was a founding member of the DNVP).[12]

The National League of German Housewives' Associations was not formally affiliated with any masculine pressure group, and its own statutes mandated that the housewives' organization was supposed to stay neutral with regard to partisan politics. In practice, however, many of its leaders (e.g., Countess Margarete v. Keyserlingk, Martha Voss-Zietz, Leonore Kuhn, Bertha Hindenberg-Delbrück, Charlotte Mühsam-Werther, Clara Mende, and Franziska Wiemann) played leading roles in or even held parliamentary seats for the DNVP or the center-right DVP. Judging from internal organization discussions, most of its members voted for or belonged to center-right or right-wing political parties. In order to preserve peace within the organization, the leadership was supposed to avoid endorsing any particular conservative party (although local chapters might work for electoral coalitions of center-right parties).[13] But the overlap between the leadership of both

[10] For the growth of conservative women's organizations during the war, and the networks that developed among them, see Andrea Süchtig-Hänger, *Das 'Gewissen der Nation.' Nationales Engagement and politisches Handeln konservativer Frauenorganisationen 1900 bis 1937* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2002).

[11] See Bridenthal, "Organized Rural Women," 389–401.

[12] For overlap between the membership of the DNVP and the RLHV (the agricultural housewives' league), see ibid., 400; see also Raffael Scheck, "German Conservatism and Female Political Activism in the Early Weimar Republic," *German History* 15 (1997): 34–55.

[13] While the leadership of the urban National League of Housewives' Associations was overwhelmingly conservative, women who belonged to more liberal political parties were found among the membership in some chapters. For an example of a local chapter that promoted political "neutrality," yet explicitly conservative policies (which

housewives' leagues and the executive committees and parliamentary delegations of both the DVP and DNVP was substantial and striking.[14]

The housewives' leagues thus simultaneously made up the conservative wing within the Weimar bourgeois women's movement, and were also influential constituencies and sources of female activists for the major center-right and right-wing Weimar political parties. For most of the Weimar period, there was little contradiction between these two sets of affiliations. Although Germany's military collapse and civilians' suffering had led to widespread rejection and the ultimate collapse of the Imperial government – which opened the way for Germany's socialist and left-wing parties to establish a parliamentary democracy – much of the middle class remained unreconciled to the nation's military defeat and new political system. Many bourgeois Germans were deeply skeptical of the legitimacy and efficacy of the new political system. Although some voted for the socialist or liberal parties in the first rounds of elections out of fear of a Communist takeover, middle-class voters drifted to the right after 1920, a tendency that was exacerbated by the disastrous hyperinflation of the early 1920s.

Women voters among the bourgeoisie tended to skew toward the religious conservative parties. A number of electoral studies done on the impact of women's enfranchisement have shown that Weimar female voters tended to support parties that had strong religious platforms (e.g., the DNVP and Catholic Center Party) and also (compared to men of the same class) that women tended to prefer parties that

ultimately drove out Jewish and liberal members, as the chapter president intended) see Reagin, *A German Women's Movement*, 240–1.

[14] The intricate and extensive linkages between the two housewives' leagues, the DNVP and DVP, are explored in a painstaking and intelligent analysis by Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation*. A few examples of the overlap between housewives' groups and these two parties (drawn from Scheck's study) must serve here. Maria Jecker, chair of the urban housewives' league after 1927, also sat on the women's executive committee of the DVP; Clara Mende, who represented the DVP in the German Reichstag from 1920–8, also played a leading role in the urban housewives' movement; Elisabet Boehm, first chair of the rural housewives' league, was also a member of the women's executive committee of the DNVP; Else von Sperber, active in rural housewives' associations, also represented the DNVP in the Reichstag from 1924–8; the DNVP was represented by two housewife-activists in the Prussian state parliament, Elsa Hielscher-Panthen and Therese Deutsch, for most of the Weimar period; and Milka Fritsch, a leading housewife activist, also represented the DVP in the Reichstag in 1923–4.

were less radical.[15] Thus, working-class women tended to prefer the Social Democrats to the Communists, and bourgeois women skewed toward those conservative parties that also championed religious values. Women voters tended to shun parties they perceived as radical, such as the Communist Party and (up through 1930) the Nazi Party. Instead, Protestant women voted disproportionately for the DVP and DNVP: both parties drew the majority of their votes from women, and the number of female votes that the DNVP received approached 60 percent of the party's total in some elections. Catholic women formed the bulk of the Catholic Center Party's voters, consistently providing 60 percent of that party's votes. Without the mobilization of female voters by female activists in the DNVP, DVP, and Catholic Center parties, Weimar Germany's ruling coalitions would have been considerably further to the left.[16] The overlap between the leadership of housewives' organizations and that of the DNVP and DVP – even though the housewives' associations also belonged to the women's movement – was therefore not as surprising as it might initially seem. And this overlap ensured that housewives' interests would be well represented within both right-wing parties.

Housewives' Leagues, Consumption, and the "Rationalization" of the Household

The consumer politics pursued by all three national housewives' leagues (urban, rural, and Catholic) reflected the broader conservatism of the parties with which they were affiliated. Generally speaking, all three housewives' groups tended to support the same economic policies and goals. All three groups attempted to fuse the rationalization of housework (a self-consciously "modern" stance) with economic nationalism, which stressed a protectionist approach to consumer issues. In a broader sense, all three housewives' leagues argued that "traditional" German family life and roles had been undermined by the stresses of the war, and by the subsequent growth of "immorality" under the socialist-led Weimar Republic. All of the housewives' groups

[15] Julia Sneeringer, *Winning Women's Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 5.

[16] Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation*, 19–20; and Sneeringer, *Winning Women's Votes*, 5–6.

were thus vocal about trends that they saw as threatening traditional family life. These included a perceived increase in the number of women working outside the home, a decline in the status of housewives, and the steady drop of the German birth rate.[17]

Some of the most conservative leaders of the housewives' league (those who were also active in the DNVP) even compared housewives to Cinderella, neglected and overworked, and cast professional women – who were more often profiled in popular culture as the New Women – as Cinderella's stepsisters. Bertha Hindenberg-Delbrück, who was prominent in the urban housewives' league in Lower Saxony, reflected the concerns of many housewife leaders when she wrote:

> It is on of the regrettable trends of our time that so many German women, out of ignorance of housekeeping and child-rearing, seek to avoid the happiness that a healthy woman receives from [bearing] a child. When one observes today's woman, who is externally masculine, with short hair and cigarettes... one might well fear for the future of the German people.... [Such women are responsible] for the destruction of unborn life [abortions], which are performed in such numbers that these losses now exceed all the deaths in the Great War.... [Housewives] must wish that their fellow women would not work in offices so much, but rather should be trained for their real profession as housewives and mothers.[18]

But at the same time, the consumer politics of these Weimar housewives' organizations (particularly the urban and Catholic housewives' leagues) were strongly influenced by the "rational" model of housewifery and consumption offered by American home economists such as Christine Fredericks. They hoped that the "rationalization" of housework could reduce housewives' workload, and also improve their image, by recasting them as professional, indeed scientific, household managers. The combination of "rationality," a desire to uphold

[17] For more on the broader politics of housewife leaders and other female activists within the DNVP and DVP – which focused on "threats" to the social fabric and family life, and urged a return to religious and nationalist values – see Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation*.

[18] From a report on a speech given by Hindenberg-Delbrück, dated Sept. 15, 1926, in NH Hann 320 I, no. 22. For other examples of the Cinderella motif used to describe housewives compared to working women, see the letter from Hindenberg-Delbrück to Franziska Wiemann, dated Nov. 22, 1926, in NH Hann 320 I, no. 45; also see her article, entitled "Die Hausfrau," in the Sonder-Beilage of the *Hannoverscher Kurier*, May 5, 1929.

women's role as housewives, and economic nationalism would generate an often complex response to consumer policy questions, and to broader questions of domesticity and family life.

American home economist Christine Fredericks (who was translated into German) and her German disciples, especially Dr. Erna Meyer (author of the best-selling advice manual *The New Household*) attempted to apply Taylorism – especially in the form of time and motion studies – to the household, by teaching "scientific management" to housewives.[19] Advice literature (in magazines, books, and government publications) and the emerging discipline of home economics thus publicized the American model of housework and consumption within Germany. Members of German housewives' organizations also traveled to America during the 1920s to observe U.S. households firsthand, and published accounts of their experiences. These first-person reports indeed became something of a genre in housewives' groups' publications during the 1920s.[20] Their reaction to rationalized American housework was generally positive, but they were sometimes made uneasy by consumption patterns that they perceived in American housewives, which they felt could undercut German notions of domesticity.

[19] For the ways that Germans perceived America during the 1920s, and how the American model influenced German rationalization, see Nolan, *Visions of Modernity. American Business and the Modernization of Germany*. For the movement to rationalize German housekeeping in general during this period, see Schlegel-Matthies, "Im Haus und am Herd," 153–90; Hiltraud Schmidt-Waldherr, "Rationalisierung der Hausarbeit in der zwanziger Jahren," in Gerda Tornieporth, ed., *Arbeitsplatz Haushalt. Zur Theorie und Ökologie der Hausarbeit* (Berlin, 1988), 32–54; Barbara Orland, "Emanzipation durch Rationalisierung? Der 'rationelle Haushalt' also Konzept institutionalisierter Frauenpolitik in der Weimarer Republik," in Dagmar Reese et al., eds., *Rationale Beziehungen? Geschlechterverhältnisse im Rationalisierungsprozess* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), 222–50.

[20] Housewives' organizations published numerous accounts by these observers in their yearbooks and magazines, as did professional home economists. Some examples include Lissy Susemihl-Gliedemeister, "Über amerikanische Frauentätigkeit," in the 1929 *Jahrbuch des Reichsverbandes Deutscher Hausfrauenvereine*, 141–55; articles in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 12 (1927): 74 and 13 (1928): 17, 52, 88, and 122; articles in *Hauswirtschaftliche Jahrbücher* 2 (1929): 23; 3 (1920): 65; and 4 (1931): 104. For a discussion of the ways in which the United States was seen as a model for the future of German consumption, particularly with regard to appliances, see Martina Hessler, "Die Einführung elektrischer Haushaltsgeräte in der Zwischenkriegszeit – Der Angebotspush der Produzenten und die Reaktion der Konsumentinnen," *Technikgeschichte* 65 (1998): 297–311.

To German home economists, government officials, and housewives' organizations, *rationalization* was defined primarily as the rearrangement of the workplace and reform of work methods according to time-and-motion studies. The housewife's workplace was above all her kitchen, the production site for meals. Housewives' associations and home economists urged that German kitchens be reduced in size and reorganized, to save the housewife from unnecessary steps and motions and to make cleaning easier. Examples of the new, smaller kitchen were depicted and propagated repeatedly in housewives' magazines, in special exhibits, and in home economics journals. Much of the new, government-sponsored housing built during the 1920s included such kitchens, and housewives' groups worked together with architects, government officials, city planners, and interior decorators to design new public housing and promote "reformed" home décor for the middle and working classes (which Germany invested in more heavily than did the United States during this period).[21] Experts also studied housewives' work methods (in dusting, mopping, etc.), and the government's National Productivity Board published booklets and posters that showed easier, simpler, and more efficient ways for women to accomplish these tasks.[22]

Most supporters of rationalization agreed that the new homes and kitchen/workplaces would not include the consumer durables (washing machines, vacuum cleaners, electric or gas stoves, refrigerators) that were allegedly ubiquitous in American households as a core component of American domestic rationalization. German industrialists and government officials argued that Germany was simply too poor

[21] See the article on the Frankfurt kitchen exhibition in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 12 (1927): 68; Schlegel-Matthies, *"Im Haus und am Herd,"* 155–73; Nancy Reagin, "Die Werkstatt der Hausfrau: Bürgerliche Frauenbewegung und Wohnungspolitik im Hannover der Zwanziger Jahre," in Adelheid v. Saldern and Sid Auffahrt, eds., *Altes und neues Wohnen: Linden und Hannover im frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Hanover: Seelze-Velber, 1992), 156–64. For the alliances between housewives' groups and other cadres of experts, see Adelheid v. Saldern, "Social Rationalization of Living and Housework in Germany and the United States in the 1920s," *History of the Family* 2 (1997): 73–97. The "rationalization" of domestic architecture, and of the kitchen in particular, had also long been promoted within the context of cooperative housing arrangements by socialist feminists (e.g., Lily Braun) and socialist architects.

[22] These time-and-motion studies were sponsored and publicized by the Home Economics Group of the National Productivity Board.

to copy the comparatively high wages and widespread ownership of durable goods that characterized American society.[23] The majority of households (i.e., working-class families) simply could not afford these appliances, although many bourgeois housewives could. A 1928 study of Berlin found only 45 percent of all households had electricity; of these, 56 percent had electric irons (by far the most popular of the "new appliances" nationally), 28 percent had vacuum cleaners, and only 0.5 percent had washing machines. In America, by contrast, 76 percent of homes with electricity had irons, 30 percent had vacuum cleaners, and 26 percent had washing machines.[24] The German version of domestic rationalization – at least, the version intended for the working class – with its reorganized kitchens and dearth of labor-saving appliances, has been called an "austere vision of modernity," certainly a fitting characterization for urban working-class households.[25]

Certainly, a lavish "modernization" of the household was not in the cards for most rural housewives. A decline in the availability of maids during this period to work in the dairies, gardens, and homes of rural households meant that agricultural housewives were even more overburdened than they had been during the prewar period. Rural housewives' associations therefore assumed that members were interested in household rationalization only insofar as time saved on housework proper could be freed up for more work in the fields and dairy. But as in working-class homes, the modernization involved was to be done on the cheap. Most male heads of rural households were unwilling to invest in electrical appliances (and the cost of the electricity to run them) that would be used only in the kitchen, although the farm might be able to acquire machinery for the fields.

[23] Nolan, *Visions of Modernity*, 216; Schlegel-Matthies, *"Im Haus und am Herd,"* 171–3.

[24] The results of the entire study are given in Schlegel-Matthies, *"Im Haus und am Herd,"* 173. For the popularity of irons in particular, see Herrad U. Bussemer, Sibylle Meyer, Barbara Orland, and Eva Schulze, "Zur technischen Entwicklung von Haushaltsgeräten," in Gerda Tornieporth, ed., *Arbeitsplatz Haushalt. Zur Theorie und Ökologie der Hausarbeit* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1988), 122. The spread of ownership of appliances was hindered not only by their cost, but by the high price of electricity. Still by the late 1930s, a percentage of homes that owned vacuum cleaners and irons had increased substantially. See Hessler, "Die Einführung elektrischer Haushaltsgeräte," 300.

[25] Nolan, *Visions of Modernity*, 207.

The 1930–2 diary of Marianne Lantzsch, the daughter of a prosperous farm family outside Dresden, reflects these priorities. Her family's farm did have electric lighting and a powered water pump, but no electric stove or kitchen appliances for the women of the family. The main cleaning tools that she and her female relatives used were buckets, rages, brushes, and water. In fact, like their Wilhelmine predecessors, they spent relatively little of their time doing "housework," as an urban woman would have defined it. Instead, they spent most of their waking hours doing dairy and livestock work, or working in the fields and garden, along with some baking, mending, and food production (e.g., producing sausages) for the household. Her farm did acquire a radio (which could be enjoyed by all family members) in 1930.[26]

The sorts of housework rationalization offered to farmwives by the rural housewives' league therefore tended to focus on time-motion studies and the reorganization of rooms in order to save steps and effort, rather than on the acquisition of new household appliances. The time saved was clearly supposed to be devoted to increasing agricultural production and the farm's income. And the courses offered to members generally focused on their work as agricultural producers, not as homemakers. Although cooking courses for young rural women were popular (as indeed they seem to have been throughout Germany, both before and after the Weimar period), the bulk of the courses and programs offered by the agricultural housewives' federation tried to train rural women as producers, not consumers: courses on sorting and packing fruits and vegetables; programs on the quality control and pricing of eggs; along with a great deal of information on gardening and poultry work.[27]

The more upscale vision of household rationalization, that marketed to more affluent households the lavish household exhibitions discussed in the following text, was implicitly bourgeois and urban. But in these consumer exhibitions, new products were enlisted to help realize a version of urban modernity that was still based on older norms of cleanliness and order. The rational urban household was filled with products designed to make it possible to reach high levels of cleanliness, without the support of a domestic servant: linoleum floors; a lack

[26] Jones, "Gender and Agricultural Change," 212–17.
[27] Ibid., 193–8.

of "dust catching" knick-knacks or elaborate furniture trim; sectioned mattresses (which could be more easily removed for frequent beating) produced in standardized sizes; and smaller "work kitchens," which were designed to save time and effort in cleaning and cooking. German industries worked with housewives' groups and the National Productivity Board to create standardized utensils and canning products, so that housewives could stock their pantries with their own preserves and produce more easily. And these new products were supposed to be acquired in addition to the goods that had always signaled bourgeois domesticity: china, cutlery, and a full cabinet of linens.

Housewives' associations advocated more expensive goods and consumer durables for their (bourgeois) members, while endorsing a variety of smaller "rationalized" products for all households. These included the standardized products that were promoted by the National Productivity Board and the German Standards Committee, ranging from pots and utensils to mattresses, which were designed to be more efficient, easier to clean, or more durable. Housewives' groups also helped popularize products with "modern" design or materials, such as the new Jena glass cookware, along with the sleek, simplified furniture and interior design developed by the Bauhaus movement and others during the 1920s.[28]

The Americanized vision of household modernity – both austere and expansive versions – assumed tangible form for consumers in hundreds of large and small exhibits mounted by housewives' associations during the late 1920s. The largest, such as the massive 1928 shows "Home and Technology" (Munich) and "Nutrition" (Berlin) were created in conjunction with government, business, and industry, and were reviewed and publicized in newspapers and magazines nationwide. Parts of both exhibits were subsequently combined to create a "traveling exhibit" that visited a series of German cities. Even a mid-sized exhibit, such as the "Blue Apron" show created by Düsseldorf women's associations in 1930, could attract fifteen thousand visitors in a month. In smaller cities and towns, local housewives' associations created their

[28] See, e.g., Klara Neundörfer, *Haushalten* (Königstein im Taunus: Verlag der Eiserne Hammer, 1929); Ludwig Neundörfer, *Wie Wohnen?* (Königstein im Taunus: Verlag der Eiserne Hammer, 1928; "Gute und schlechte Formen im Haushalt," *Frauenland* 20 (1927): 78. For the work of National Productivity Board, see Nolan, *Visions of Modernity*, 214–15.

own shows, or contracted with firms that specialized in producing these exhibits. In return for the housewives' endorsement, promotion, and donated materials, these firms organized the shows using their own exhibits (along with material from local businesses) and gave the local housewives' association a share of the proceeds.[29]

These exhibits showcased every aspect of household rationalization, including model kitchens, living rooms, bedrooms, and bathrooms. For households with different income levels the largest exhibits would provide several models for every room. Visitors could see demonstrations of the new household appliances that used electricity or gas, along with information on the cost of using these products. In some shows, entire kitchens or laundry rooms from the United States stood alongside German models. Bedrooms and living rooms reflected the new style of interior decoration. In many shows, visitors could also purchase the displayed appliances and furniture. Most shows also stressed rational nutrition, which urged the consumption of more fruits and vegetables, and included cooking demonstrations offering visitors a taste of these healthier dishes and distributing recipe booklets. Other rooms might include materials on rationalized methods of housework or shopping.[30]

Exhibits on the "new household" were usually organized by housewives' groups, but other women's associations (e.g., confessional or teachers' organizations) would hold annual conventions in conjunction with such exhibits to offer their members special tours of the shows. In many cities, pupils from domestic science classes toured the exhibitions. City dwellers came by the thousands, attracted by free food samples, discount coupons, and opportunities to buy the latest gadgets. One critic remarked that the atmosphere of the exhibits often resembled annual fairs.[31] These shows ensured that many (if not most) urban housewives would have been exposed to the vision of the modern

[29] See *Der Haushalt als Wirtschaftsfaktor. Ergebnisse der Ausstellung Heim und Technik* (Munich, 1928); *Frauenwirken in Haus und Familie. Die Ausstellung der Düsseldorfer Frauenverbände. Rückblick und Ausblick* (Düsseldorf, 1930). *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also regularly carried reports on these shows, large and small, from all over Germany. See the correspondence between housewives' associations and firms specializing in these shows in Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (hereafter, NH) Hann 320 I no. 47, and in the archive of the Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund (hereafter, AKDFB), files 1–74–4 and 1–74–5.

[30] See *Frauenwirken in Haus und Familie* and *Der Haushalt als Wirtschaftsfaktor.*

[31] See the critical article in *Deutsche Hauswirtschaft* 21 (1936): 114.

household, even if their daily reality did not include its technology. Rationalized housekeeping was also incorporated into domestic science classes during this period, both those offered in public schools (in increasing numbers) and those offered by private employers to female employees.[32] This trend in home economics education ensured that the new approach to housekeeping would be transmitted to the younger generation.

The rational shopping habits that housewives' organizations advocated, however, reflected the ambivalence that these associations felt toward mass production and the American model of the consumer society. Housewives' associations had class investments that led them to defend small retailers and artisans (the backbone of the middle class – and key constituencies of the conservative parties) from the threat posed by department stores, one-price stores, consumer cooperatives (affiliated with the socialist labor movement), and chains of larger retailers. Many members of housewives' associations were married to small businessmen or craftsmen. Housewives' associations therefore often denounced the "cheap" quality of mass-produced goods (*Dutzendwaren*), and reminded their members that small retailers could give better advice and more personalized service. Articles that their magazines published on consumer issues also showed strong distrust and dislike of the advertising and promotion that accompanied mass production. Similar to home economists, housewives' associations stressed repeatedly that "the most expensive product is still the cheapest" over the long run, because it would last longer, and advised readers to buy the best quality that they could possibly afford (which implicitly meant buying from craftsmen).[33]

Although they rejected department stores, housewives' groups still sought to empower the housewife/consumer in her dealings with retailers and artisans through increased knowledge about commodities (*Warenkunde*). The housewife's skill at shopping, the result of detailed education about the qualities and attributes of products, would help equalize the relationship between merchants and consumers, and

[32] For the increase in the number of rationalized home economics courses offered by employers, see Nolan, *Visions of Modernity*, 216–18.

[33] The saying "the best is still the cheapest" apparently predated World War I and was picked up on by housewives' organizations; the strong preference for "quality" in consumer goods is still very much evident in German discussions today.

housewives' organizations tried to educate their members in meetings and publications. Because housewives did not always have the time to acquire this knowledge, however, housewives' associations went further. The urban National League of German Housewives' Associations created a center to test consumer products in 1925. Producers could submit their products, which were tested for durability, cost of operation, and ease of use. Those that the center judged worthy could carry the League's symbol (a sun stamp) on their products and advertising. Home economists and housewives' magazines advised women to "look for the sun symbol" when shopping.[34] In many larger cities, housewives' organizations established advice centers with permanent exhibitions on the "new household," where consumers could obtain information about new products. The largest and most elaborate was the so-called *Heibaudi*, which advised over fifty thousand consumers in 1932.[35] Housewives' organizations and home economists also emphatically and consistently warned housewives against the use of credit or buying on time. Paying cash, they argued, put the housewife/consumer in a stronger position vis-à-vis merchants. All of these policies were attempts to strengthen the position of housewives because small retailers and artisans derived much of their authority from their specialized knowledge about products and their control over access to credit.

The industries that produced household goods (e.g., Siemens, for electronic appliances, or Schott, which manufactured Jena glassware) worked with the German Standards Committee and the urban and Catholic housewives' leagues to market their goods to German women. They lent or donated samples to housewives' exhibitions, agreed with new norming standards for the size and shape of products, and sought (and publicized) the seal of approval that their goods could get from housewives' testing centers. Overall, this was a loose partnership

[34] The testing center was publicized in almost all advice literature and housewives' magazines and often had a booth at the larger household exhibitions. See, e.g., Erna Meyer, *Der neue Haushalt. Ein Wegweiser zur wirtschaftlicher Hausführung*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Franckh'sche Verlagshandlung, 1926), 152. For the background and operating procedures of the testing center, see Schlegel-Matthies, "*Im Haus und am Herd*," 194–6. The center was modeled on the American Good Housekeeping Institute and was the first of its kind in Europe.

[35] *Heibaudi* stood for *Hauswirtschaftlicher Einkaufs-Beratungs-Auskunftsdienst*; see the article on it in the 1928 *Jahrbuch des Reichsverbandes Deutscher Hausfrauenvereine*.

between particular governmental agencies, bourgeois housewives' groups, and industries to promote new sorts of consumption: a bourgeois style of domesticity that was hygienic, orderly, rational, and modern.

Economic Nationalism and the Politics of Food

The consumer education of housewives' organizations included much more than just the promotion or evaluation of new technology and household rationalization. Much of their work in this area, perhaps even the bulk of it, was concerned with the more fundamental consumption issue of food. Housewives' associations had been originally created during the war to deal with issues relating to foodstuffs, and food politics were among these organizations' chief preoccupations. Leaders of housewives' groups acknowledged that not all households could afford durable goods, but all households had to purchase food: foodstuffs were therefore the area where they hoped to have the most impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. These organizations' exhibitions thus always devoted considerable space to cooking demonstrations and recipe distribution within the model kitchens; their advice centers included rotating exhibitions on nutrition and cooking; and their publications devoted as much space to food choices as they did to rationalized housework. But although they paid as much (or even more) attention to apples than they did to vacuum cleaners, their discussions of food still expressed the full range of anxieties and aspirations that the new consumer society evoked, and consistently urged a program of economic nationalism.

The most important fears and hopes in housewives' discussions about food centered on the promotion of "German" foods and the rejection of imported foodstuffs. This was part of the general support for protectionism predominant during the 1920s, and it reflected the anxiety that "unrestrained" consumption would undermine traditional social hierarchies. Buying German foods would help protect German farmers above all, but housewives' associations also linked German foodstuffs to more traditional diets, life-styles, and domesticity. Housewife leaders also associated buying foreign foods with the same lack of "social responsibility" that led many housewives to desert local businesses and artisans for department stores or chains. Housewives'

economic nationalism also reflected their close alliance with the rural housewives' league, whose members demanded protective tariffs especially for "women's sphere of agriculture – milk products, poultry, eggs, fruit, and vegetables."[36] Throughout the 1920s, urban housewives' associations worked with German food producers to try to influence housewives' choices of products. In the process, they helped further develop categorizations of food begun during World War I, in which products were assigned ambivalent and conflicting attributes. They continued to promote rationalization, which stressed abundance in some areas (e.g., the acquisition of durable goods). Protectionism, however – usually conceptualized as "socially responsible" or patriotic consumption – was an even higher priority.

Some of the foodstuffs that housewives' organizations tried to promote were the same products they had stressed during World War I, because wartime autarky had relied on the same products that protectionism singled out in peacetime: potatoes and dark bread. Large sections of Germany's arable land supported rye or barley crops better than wheat. To be "self-sufficient" in grain, therefore, and support local farmers, German consumers would have to eat breads made with rye flour, and utilize the wheat that Germany had to the fullest by eating whole wheat bread. German consumers, however, shared the almost universal Western preference for lighter (or white) wheat breads, with their crisp crusts and connotations of luxury.[37] Housewives' organizations thus joined agrarian interests in promoting rye as the "patriotic" grain. They distributed booklets and presented slide shows to their members that explained how rye bread had more fiber, was more nutritious, and helped save German farmers. Wheat bread, especially the light rolls (*Brötchen*), ought to be seen as luxuries, and reserved for occasional use only. Housewives' associations promoted "rye days," and when a delegation from the housewives' National League met with President Hindenburg in 1928 (in conjunction with the opening of a large exhibition), the league's magazine later noted that President Hindenburg praised the league's promotion of rye. Hindenburg stressed

[36] Bridenthal, "Organized Rural Women," 401.

[37] The preference for white bread was widespread and widely bemoaned by social reformers, who simply could not understand why workers preferred the (less nutritious) white bread and rejected the cheaper foods associated with poverty.

that he ate only rye bread and proclaimed that "a patriot eats rye bread," a point that housewives' groups stressed repeatedly in their consumer education.[38]

Housewives' organizations went beyond the products promoted during World War I in their consumer education. Some of their most passionate rhetoric attacked the so-called southern fruits (*Südfrüchte*): imported tropical fruits, especially bananas and oranges. Housewives' publications repeatedly denounced mothers who bought oranges and bananas for their children, arguing that these imports hurt German farmers and Germany's balance of trade; tropical fruits were labeled unnecessary luxuries. Housewives' organizations recognized that Germany's climate did not supply local fruit year round, but argued that a conscientious housewife would buy German fruits in season and put them up or store them in her cellar over the winter. Magazines for housewives and advice literature published articles telling women about the various ways to store and preserve different sorts of local produce: putting them up in jars, storing them in bins, and layered among straw or sand. Hard work and thrift – mainstays of prewar discussions of proper German domesticity – were implicit in these discussions of household management and food choices.

Rural women kept and preserved some of what they produced, but many small town and urban women also went through annual routines of "putting up," drying, canning, or otherwise preserving jam, sauerkraut, beans, fruit, carrots, and so forth for their families' needs each winters. Often, the women grew the food in their own small garden plots, or even simply put up produce that they had bought in season at the market. One woman interviewed decades later recalled that she had filled five hundred glass jars each summer, and usually put up two hundred pounds of "spreads" (jams or other bread spreads) each year. "I think about this now that I am old," she added, "and I wonder: why did we work ourselves so hard? Why? We could have taken things a bit

[38] Promotion of rye bread was a regular theme in housewives' publications. For the meeting with Hindenburg, see *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 13 (1928): 92–3. For an example of a "rye day," see *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 15 (1930): 56. For correspondence with agricultural interests and examples of the protectionist propaganda distributed by housewives, see AKDFB, file 1–70–2. The promotion and government protection of rye had a long history, stretching back into the Wilhelmine period, when the Emperor had endorsed rye as the "patriotic" grain.

easier, and our families wouldn't have starved."[39] But homemade preserves were seen as healthier, better-tasting, and were also being touted as more patriotic; many women simply accepted this as a normal part of their work loads.

Housewives who avoided putting up or storing produce and who chose instead to buy imported fruits during the winter were stigmatized as being simply lazy and unpatriotic. Apples were particularly praised as "the German fruit," and frequently juxtaposed against bananas or oranges. One 1927 article in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* criticized lazy housewives who "shy away from the small efforts that are necessary when apples are stored in the cellar": checking stored apples daily, turning them regularly, and using up those that were going bad. "That is why many housewives prefer oranges," the author concluded angrily, "it is simply easier for them to buy as many as they need at the moment."[40] Other writers combined the rejection of tropical fruits with the recurrent distrust of advertising, blaming the promotion of tropical fruits by the advertising industry. "'Eat bananas' scream hundreds of alluring advertisements at us," wrote one author in *Frauenland*, the Catholic Housewives' Union magazine, "is it any wonder, then, when we fall victim to this unscrupulous advertising?"[41] The most conservative members of the housewives' movement, such as the DNVP activist Martha Voss-Zietz, even yearned for a more authoritarian solution to the insidious appeal of tropical fruits, praising the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini for his restrictions on foreign food imports and concluding "how can a responsible citizen today not wish for a man like Mussolini, who ends with a stroke of the pen the import of bananas and teaches Germans to eat German apples ... ?"[42]

[39] See this interview and other women's comments on the "norm" of extensive food preservation each year in Bärbel Kuhn, *Haus-Frauen-Arbeit*, 82–4.

[40] "Hausfrauen, kellert Äpfel ein!," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 12 (1927): 168–9.

[41] "Eine Lücke in der Front! Betrachtungen zum Auslandskonsum," *Frauenland* 23 (1930): 188. Articles and other material that denounced purchasing imports, including tropical fruits, were ubiquitous in housewives' publications. See, e.g., the articles in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 11 (1926): 177; 12 (1927): 116; and 13 (1928): 179; in *Frauenland* 23 (1930): 185 and 242 and 24 (1931): 130 and 194. For the discussions within housewives' organizations about tropical fruits, see AKDFB 1–73–3 and NH Hann 320 I no. 79, vol. 1.

[42] Martha Voß-Zietz, "Kauft deutsche Waren!" *Frauenkorrespondenz* 12, no. 3, January 16, 1930, quoted in Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation*, 118.

Maria Jecker (a leader in the urban housewives' league) also approvingly cited Mussolini's prohibition on imported bananas in Italy, and told her organization's members that "not a single banana or orange must appear on the table of a German housewife, so long as the beauty of German fruits beckons [in the marketplace]."[43]

Housewives' organizations also championed butter, although the politics of butter consumption were more complex and problematic than those of other foodstuffs. Butter had been heavily coveted during World War I, particularly among the bourgeoisie. The distribution of butter had been one of the most hotly debated issues during the war, while margarine had been one of the ersatz foodstuffs promoted in its place.[44] Butter, once again widely available, was thus a symbol of peacetime and normalcy. It was also produced in Germany and was seen as a "natural" product. By contrast, many housewife/consumers viewed margarine with suspicion, because of its "unnatural" and dubious ingredients. Its national provenance was also questionable because even if it was manufactured in Germany, it was made out of imported raw materials (including whale blubber and coconut oil). Some of the best-known brands, moreover, (such as *Sanella*) were owned by foreign corporations.[45] However, housewives' organizations could not simply promote the use of butter over margarine – as they did apples over oranges – because Germany imported a great deal of butter: Danish butter in particular was widely preferred. And leaders of housewives' associations were aware that many households could not afford butter, which cost about twice as much as margarine.

Housewives' groups could and did appeal to their members to buy German butter rather than Danish butter. To substitute for margarine and to aid German dairy farmers, housewives' organizations also began to promote a dairy product called *Quark*, a sour sort of curds made from the milk leftover from butter production. Unknown to many German consumers during the 1920s, and unavailable in many areas, *Quark* was used as a bread spread (in place of butter or margarine) or to make desserts. Both of the larger housewives' organizations, working

[43] See the reprint of a 1927 talk given by Jecker in BA R 8083 Bd. 8, Werbeschrift.

[44] For a discussion of the psychological significance of butter to German consumers, see Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 97–102.

[45] See the correspondence of the Catholic Housewives' Union regarding margarine in AKDFB, file 1–74–5.

with the German Dairy Board, pushed it enthusiastically. Housewives' groups distributed samples of *Quark* to their members, to familiarize them with its taste, along with recipes that used *Quark*; they also lobbied local retailers to carry it.[46] These promotional campaigns, which the National Socialists carried forward after 1933, apparently established *Quark* as a product. It is a staple foodstuff in Germany today.

Finally, housewives' organizations worked with the fishing industry to promote the consumption of fish, especially herring. Fish was not promoted in competition to any foreign foodstuff, but rather advocated in order to protect the jobs of fishermen and the German fishing industry. Housewives' organizations distributed recipes and flyers promoting fish consumption, and sent some of their members to courses sponsored by the industry so that they would be trained in cooking unfamiliar varieties. Course graduates returned home to teach fellow housewives.[47]

Fish, *Quark*, rye bread, apples, and German butter were promoted specifically and vehemently, while white bread, oranges, and bananas were stigmatized. Above and beyond these particular foodstuffs, German housewives' organizations also argued in their publications and exhibits that housewives had a patriotic duty to buy German. Writers frequently criticized the German consumer for being partial to foreign goods, and asserted that other nations' consumers were far more loyal to native products. A typical 1928 article in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* bemoaned the fact:

> Doubtless the German consumer still has the belief that a foreign product is more interesting and elegant.... [S]he who buys perfume from the firm of Coty gives money into French hands.... [F]oreign carpets are also unnecessary, since the German carpet industry has been producing the most wonderful carpets for decades; their patterns are easy for us to understand, while the figures on a Smyrna or Persian rug require a degree in philosophy to understand.... [Paris fashions] are also unneeded. In Germany there is also a fashion industry; its products may be somewhat different, but they perhaps are more suited to the essence of German womanhood.[48]

Housewives' leaders urged their organizations' members to be vigilant about the national origins of everything they purchased, even flowers for the dinner table. Martha Voss-Zietz circulated an open letter to members of the urban housewives' league, asking German housewives to stop purchasing foreign flowers for their homes during the winter because this undermined German flower growers and hurt Germany's balance of trade with other nations. Indeed, she called upon all German women to refuse floral tributes from admirers if they contained foreign, exotic plants. She appealed to actresses and singers to throw back foreign bouquets that were tossed to them on the stage, promising that "all men and women whose feelings are truly and deeply German will give you warm and lasting thanks for such a public display of sacrifice, which would awaken patriotism in the souls of hundreds, even in those who have only a remnant of such feeling left in them." At home, German table settings should remain pure because "the dignity of women in today's Germany is better suited to the simple, unpretentious German winter flower."[49]

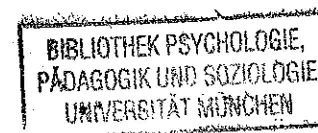
Housewives' organizations and home economists consistently linked the individual woman's purchasing habits to the national economy, making explicit the link between personal consumption and the political. They argued that if the German housewife would only buy German, then unemployment would be reduced, Germany's balance of trade would be improved, and Germany would be better able to pay the "tribute" of reparations payments imposed upon her by the Treaty of Versailles. In her housekeeping manual, *The New Household*,

[46] For the Catholic Housewives' Union promotion of *Quark*, see the correspondence in AKDFB, file 1–70–2. For an example of one of the articles housewives' magazines ran to publicize its use, see *Frauenland* 24 (1931): 131. The correspondence in housewives' organization files indicates that many of their members were unfamiliar with *Quark*, hence the need to distribute *Kostproben* (samples for tasting). Complaints that it was not well known or widely carried in stores persisted into the 1930s; see Bundesarchiv Berlin-Zehlendorf NS 44/35, minutes of the schooling course for nutritional advisors, Sept. 20, 1937.

[47] See the correspondence regarding fish consumption in AKDFB, file 1–74–2. See also the articles promoting fish consumption as an act of solidarity with German fishermen in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 11 (1926):160; 14 (1929): 44; and 16 (1931): 51.

[48] From "Volkswirtschaftliche Verantwortung der Frau bei Einkäufen," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 13 (1928): 179–80.

[49] See the letter by Voss-Zietz (n.d., but probably early 1922) in the papers of the Reichsverband Deutscher Hausfrauenvereine, in the Bundesarchiv, Abteilung Reich und DDR (hereafter, BA) R8083 Bd. 22, S. 108. For yet another article urging housewives to "buy German," which was characterized as being "socially responsible," see Dr. Ellen Niemer, "Was wollen die Hausfrauenvereine," in the exhibition program "Die Hauswirtschaft," copy in BA 8083 Bd. 47.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Erna Meyer even blamed the hyperinflation of the early 1920s on Germans' purchases of unneeded foreign luxuries. During the early 1920s and after 1929, many writers indeed came close to arguing that German housewives could single-handedly rescue Germany's economy.[50]

After the onset of the Depression, the "buy German" campaigns mounted by both urban and rural housewives' associations became insistent and almost incessant, as housewives' groups (allied with German industrialists) hosted "German weeks" in most areas, with displays in store windows, public skits, musical performances and plays, or parades. Perhaps assuming that the Depression ruled out the purchase of foreign rugs and fashions for most consumers, the "German weeks" focused primarily on food products. One play, "Buy German Products!," produced by housewives' groups in many cities, was set in a marketplace. In the play, the farmwomen who sold German produce there banded together with female shoppers to drive out a woman who sold bananas and oranges.[51]

The American model of consumption and housework, along with rationalization in general, was thus attractive for German housewives' organizations, but not when it conflicted with protectionism. The argument that housewives should preserve apples rather than buying oranges year round was rooted in more than simple protectionism, however. It reflected specific notions regarding the trade-off between wasting labor and wasting resources when planning housework, notions that had become well-established during the nineteenth century. When it came to foreign fruits and mass-produced imports, housewives' associations fell back upon an older, more labor-intensive vision of housework and consumption, and demanded that housewives put up or recycle foodstuffs and clothing (which took more effort, but

[50] See Meyer, *Der neue Haushalt*, 135. For other examples of writers who linked the average household's consumption habits to the national economy, see Cilli van Aubel, "Bedeutung und Aufgabe der Frau als Verbraucherin in der Wirtschaft," in Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund (Hg.), *Frau und Wirtschaft. Vorträge der 11. Generalversammlung des KDF in Breslau* (Cologne: privately printed, 1931); "Hausfrau-Einkauf-Volkswirtschaft," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 11 (1926): 177–9; "Was-wie-wo kauft die Hausfrau?" *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 14 (1929): 163.

[51] See the copy of the play in NH Hann 320 I no. 50; material on "German weeks" in AKDFB, file 1–73–3. For the support and publicity given to the "German weeks" by women in the DNVP and DVP, see Scheck, *Mothers of Nation*, 116–18.

saved resources and cash) rather than buying cheap, mass-produced replacements (which was "wasteful" in terms of materials, but also labor saving). This strategy made sense within the budgets of lower income households, but housewives' organizations were clearly advocating this approach for all families, no matter how well-off because the approach was seen as virtuous per se. Even for the well-to-do, "socially responsible" consumption meant choosing more labor-intensive forms of housework in some areas in order to support economic nationalism.

In this respect, the American model – otherwise viewed in generally positive terms – made observers from German housewives' groups uneasy, as they perceived what they interpreted as the "wastefulness" of American households, which they linked to rationalization. The most extreme example of this critique was a 1928 article in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* that argued that rationalization had taught American housewives to assign a market value to their own labor, which they then included in calculations as to whether tasks were "worth" doing. When it came to washing underwear, for example, American women concluded that it was cheaper to buy new underwear rather then washing it themselves or having it washed, which supposedly led to the custom of disposable underwear. The article concluded that in America "there are no homes in our sense of the word. People simply buy cheap underwear and throw it away after they have worn it.... Heaven preserve us from this Americanization of the household."[52] What would the writer have thought of Pampers?

"Americanized," rationalized housekeeping was associated not only with wastefulness, but laziness and self-centeredness because American housewives allegedly spent the time they saved playing bridge, sports, and going shopping.[53] Leaders of housewives' associations explicitly

[52] See "Erwerbstätigkeit und Hausfrauengeist," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 13 (1928): 50–2. One can imagine what the writer would have thought of disposable diapers.

[53] For stereotypes of American housewives as unconscientious housewives who spent most of their time pursuing interests outside the home, see a series of articles by Louise Diehl (who traveled to the United States during the 1920s and published her observations in a number of magazines and newspapers), including Diehl, "Die Berufsfrau in Amerika," *Hannoverscher Kurier* Dec. 29, 1927 (Nr. 606/07) Beilage *Die Frau*; Louise Diehl, "Amerikanischer Haushalt," *Der Bazar* (clipping, n.d., in clippings file of NH Hann 320 I, Nr. 47). Such articles appeared regularly in the bourgeois women's press during the Weimar period. Examples include Lissy Susemihl-Gliedemeister, "Über amerikanische Frauentätigkeit" in the 1929 *Jahrbuch des Reichsverbandes Deutscher*

rejected such "mindless Americanization," and assured their members that rationalization was only being pursued in order to allow housewives to fill a vaguely described "cultural role." As a leader of the Karlsruhe provincial league of urban housewives wrote in 1930, the housewives' movement was not only an economic, but also a spiritual movement, and if it promoted rationalization of housework "this should be done not in order to make the household soulless, as happened in America, but free the housewife's energies for the great cultural tasks which are laid upon her as the 'priestess of the hearth' [a characterization popular since the nineteenth century, which evoked Germanic tribal imagery] and the carrier of German culture and tradition."[54] Other leaders within the housewives' movement agreed with this use of free time (also using the "priestess of the hearth" image), but added that women could also use the time gained through rationalization to have additional children, and thus increase Germany's lagging birth rate.[55]

The preference for labor-intensive approaches to some areas of housework was therefore a continuation of an older, prewar vision of housewifery and domesticity, which competed with the American model of scientific management during the Weimar period and ultimately eclipsed that model after 1933. Prewar notions of domesticity and household management resurfaced and indeed culminated in an ideal figure, a new state certification proposed by Weimar housewives' organizations: the master housewife. Throughout the 1920s, the Catholic Housewives' Union and the urban housewives' National League promoted the concept of the master housewife, who was to receive state certification after completing training, and passing a series of examinations. They borrowed the language and hierarchy of German guilds and artisans to envision the ideal housewife.

Hausfrauenvereine, 141–55; "Hausfrau und Volkswirtschaft. Das Fiasko der Konsumfinanzierung in Amerika," in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* 12 (1927): 74; Else Maria Bud, "Shopping und andere Modern" *Hannoverscher Kurier* Dec. 22, 1927 (Nr. 596/7) Beilage *Die Frau*; Mrs. Emerson, "Amerikanische Ehen," *Hannoverscher Kurier* Oct. 6, 1927 (Nr. 466/67) Beilage *Die Frau*; and Alice Salomon, "Frau und Politik in Amerika," *Hannoverscher Kurier* July 24, 1924 (Nr. 342/43) Beilage *Die Frau*. See also Schmidt, *Reisen in die Moderne*; Nolan, *Visions of Modernity*, 109 and 206–34.

[54] See Niemer, "Was wollen die Hausfrauenvereine," 8.

[55] For the argument that rationalization would lead to larger families, see Reagin, *A German Women's Movement*, 230–1.

The master housewife was a woman who had taken special training courses and passed tests (as did artisans), which certified her as knowledgeable and skilled in every aspect of homemaking. Once she had achieved this certification, she could take on "apprentices," girls who had finished their schooling and would now be trained for careers as servants: ultimately, the servants would rise (marry) and become housewives.[56] As depicted in Weimar discussions, the proposed master housewife was an expert at saving resources (and wasting labor): she could "make new things out of worn-out objects." She put up, canned, or stored foods of every kind when they were in season; sewed clothes for all family members; repaired and cut down worn clothes; ensured thriftiness through meticulous bookkeeping; and wasted not. She was a rationalized, state-certified version of the ideal bourgeois housewife of the prewar period.

The proposal for the certified master housewife was closely linked to demands for a mandatory apprenticeship in domestic service for all young women. In practice, housewives' organizations argued that young bourgeois women could continue the prewar practice of a year at a domestic science school, or training in a relative's home. But many leaders of housewives' organizations argued that young working-class women should serve out their "apprenticeships" (sometimes called the "home economics year of mandatory service") in the homes of bourgeois housewives, in effect working as servants for little or no pay. Other supporters of the "home economics year" conceded that a year of additional domestic science training in a school might suffice. Either sort of training would teach working-class girls about "rational" housekeeping, the thrifty use of resources, and how to reach modern levels of hygiene (a continuation of the prewar bourgeois suspicion that working-class housewives did not maintain extremely high levels of cleanliness). Only through such training, as the members of a housewives' organization pointed out to their local city council, "can

[56] See Bridenthal, "Professional Housewives," and "Organized Rural Women," 395–6; Schlegel-Matthies, "*Im Haus und am Herd*," 222. The "apprenticeship" proposal – which some supporters wanted to make mandatory for all female *Volksschule* graduates – was in part an attempt to obtain domestic servants without pay. The "master housewife" proposal was a real bid for professional status and state certification, based on prewar traditions of housekeeping. For petitions that described and justified the *Pflichtjahr*, see BA R 8083, vol. 14, 233.

our women reach competence in domestic science and the role of the *Hausmutter*, which will lead to the economic, physical, and moral healing of family life, and counteract the serious problems and dangers that threaten the entire life of our *Volk*."[57] Only a prewar standard of German domesticity could restore family life and, thus, save the nation.

These proposals served two purposes. First, they helped the housewives' leagues to refashion housework as a profession, and one that required training by a state-certified "master" housewife, akin to other professions or artisanal trades. The introduction of a mandatory service year would also have helped ease the shortage of servants among the bourgeoisie. Working-class women moved increasingly into service-sector jobs during the Weimar period, while the economic security of many in the middle classes had been undermined by the hyperinflation of the early 1920s. As a result, it was more and more difficult for bourgeois housewives to find or even afford domestic servants. Although the percentage of the German workforce that was female stayed broadly constant during the Weimar period (about one-third of the total), the percentage of female employees who were employed as servants fell about one-third during the period, from 16.1 percent of the total to 11.4 percent.[58] At the same time, servants were freed from the semifeudal regulations that they had worked under, and the effect of this, combined with the reduced supply of domestic servants, meant an upswing in employer-employee tensions and complaints in this sector.

An "apprenticeship" that compelled (nonunionized) young working women to be "trained" by housewives for low or no wages would have solved the bourgeois "servant problem," reinforced class distinctions, and shored up the status of bourgeois housewives. Housewives' organizations publicized and lobbied for the mandatory home economics year in localities across Germany. They apparently succeeded in some

[57] See NH Hann 320 I, no. 23, petition to the city of Hanover from the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für hauswirtschaftliche-hausmütterliche Erziehung, dated Nov. 24, 1925. For reports on similar initiatives launched by housewives' organizations in other cities, dating back to the prewar period, see BA NS 5/VI, vol. 6863. For the tendency of bourgeois women's organizations to use rationalization as a new vehicle to critique working-class housekeeping, see also Nolan, *Visions of Modernity*, 222.

[58] Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 95.

cities, including Bremen and Halle, and laid the basis for a more sustained and successful campaign after 1933.[59]

Housewives and the End of Weimar

Even during the middle years of the decade, after the German currency stabilized and Germany's economy was growing, the Weimar parliamentary system had never worked smoothly or easily. From the start, a block of the electorate (25 percent in the beginning, and this share had increased by the late 1920s) voted for parties such as the Communists or DNVP and later the Nazi Party (NSDAP), which were all bitterly opposed to the Weimar regime and generally voted against the ruling coalition. Germans distributed their votes among a broad array of parties ranging across the political spectrum, which meant that it could be difficult to piece together a coalition with a majority of the Reichstag seats, with that majority still able to agree on common policies and legislation. After the beginning of the Depression, it gradually became impossible to piece together any working majority and the parliamentary system became paralyzed by September 1930.

In every election after 1928, mass unemployment and political turmoil led voters to increasingly desert moderate or centrist parties for small interest group parties or for parties on the far right or left of the political spectrum. The National Socialists were able to increase their share of the national vote from 2.6 percent in 1928 to18.3 percent in 1930, reaching a peak of 37.3 percent in the last free national election of July 1932.[60] Indeed, after the July 1932 elections, the Communists and Nazis held a majority of the Reichstag seats between them, which brought the work of the Reichstag to a stop. Street violence between supporters of different parties became common. The final series of Weimar cabinets and increasingly authoritarian chancellors ruled without Reichstag majorities, surviving only because of emergency decrees issued by the Republic's President von Hindenburg.

[59] See the newspaper reports on agitation by housewives' organizations across Germany and their success at forcing the introduction of a "duty year" in Bremen and Halle in NH Hann 320 I, no. 22.

[60] Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 687–8.

The DVP was unable to position itself as a viable alternative to the Nazis and far right during this period, and declined sharply in elections after 1930. The DNVP, on the other hand, ended its participation in ruling coalitions (the party had been an uneasy and critical member of some ruling coalitions during the late 1920s) and went into opposition, radicalized by its authoritarian leader, Albert Hugenburg. Hugenburg led the DNVP into an electoral alliance with the National Socialists. DNVP and Nazi representatives walked out of the Reichstag together in February 1931, and the two parties (allied with other right-wing splinter groups) formed a radical right coalition, the Harzburg Front, in late 1931.[61]

Although women in both the DVP and DNVP opposed the Nazis' approach to religion and their plans to restrict the role of women in public life (and the Nazis' refusal to nominate any women for elective office), both parties – particularly the DNVP – shared many of the National Socialists' goals. At any rate, the DVP's decline after 1930 meant that all but one of its female representatives disappeared from the Reichstag, and its voters drifted to other parties (mostly to the right). The women of the DNVP, on the other hand, generally strongly approved of the Nazis' anti-Semitism, opposition to parliamentary democracy, and their vision of a racialized *Volksgemeinschaft* (a term used to describe the imagined German "racial community"). Similar to Nazi voters and activists, most of the women active in the DNVP were ecstatic at the destruction of the Weimar Republic in March 1933.[62] As the most important study of women in the DNVP notes, "the DNVP women in this period never forgot what united them with the Nazis, namely their racialized vision of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

[61] For the decline of centrist parties and the growth of parties on either end of the political spectrum, see Michael Kater, *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Members and Leaders, 1919–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); and Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[62] For an account of the substantial overlap between the ideology of the DNVP and its women and that of the Nazis, and of the DNVP's support for the Nazi take-over, see Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation*, 240–7. See also Süchtig-Hänger, *Gewissen der Nation*, who argues that the women's groups within the DNVP were among the most vehement in rejecting parliamentary democracy, and that they were strong supporters of Hugenberg's radical course.

The racist message of the leading DNVP women permeated their articles, speeches, and programmatic writings. The *Deutschnationale Frau* [the main newsletter for women in the DNVP] poured out a mass of untranslatable *völkisch* jargon to encourage women to become the breeders and educators of a racially conscious people."[63]

Housewives' organizations, many of whose leaders and members belonged to the DNVP or other right-wing parties, also endorsed much of the Nazi's program. Many leaders of local housewives' chapters were also active within the DNVP, and thus worked enthusiastically for their party's alliance with the National Socialists, sometimes in conjunction with local chapters of Nazi women's organizations.[64] It is clear that many members of the housewives' leagues must have switched their votes from the DVP and even the DNVP to the National Socialists after 1930 when the Nazi Party closed its gender gap, began to win as many votes among women as men, and attracted the bulk of the votes cast by the German bourgeoisie.

Because many leaders within the urban and rural housewives' leagues were now part of the radical right opposition to the Weimar government, they lost patience with the national bourgeois women's movement, which was increasingly polarized. Still officially constrained to partisan "neutrality," the more liberal organizations and women within the national women's movement made their distaste for the Nazis clear, and urged women voters to vote for parties that respected women's rights (clearly a veiled rejection of the National Socialists). The two largest housewives' organizations no longer wanted to be part of an umbrella group for all women, and chose to affirm their loyalty to the Harzburg Front by resigning from the League of German Women's Associations in 1932. Bertha Hindenberg-Delbrück defended the decision to leave the women's movement and predicted that

> [i]n the near future we will see which group of women leaders possessed more insight and foresight... [the housewives' organizations left the umbrella organization for the women's movement, the BDF] not because the goals of the

[63] Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation*, 247.

[64] For a detailed examination of the steady drift of houswives' organizations to the right in one city, and their support for the Harzburg Front alliance, see Reagin, *A German Women's Movement*, 242–7.

housewives' movement are too narrow, but rather because they are broader and aim higher than those of the BDF. . . . The BDF concentrates on *women*, on their importance, their rights. . . . The housewives' movement has concentrated from the very beginning on the *family*, the *Volk*, and the *nation*, within which the housewife takes her place as an achiever, a producer, and a servant. . . . On the one side [the BDF, the goals are determined by] the individual, gender and freedom (in the sense of liberalism) – on our side, organic incorporation into a natural, higher community life.[65]

There was now little that divided the rhetoric of the main housewives' leagues from that of the National Socialist women's organizations.

After the Nazis gained control of the national government in early 1933, many women who had belonged to the DVP, DNVP, and the housewives' leagues rushed to join the Nazi Party. Some were accepted as members, while others were rejected because of critical statements about the National Socialists that they had made while active for the other right-wing parties. In any case, they were not persecuted by the new regime, and most continued their work in some form after 1933. The work of the Catholic housewives' league was suspended, but both the urban and rural housewives' organizations were absorbed into their Nazi counterparts (instead of being dissolved outright, as was the fate of most of the bourgeois women's movement) and some of their leaders found new careers within Nazi organizations after 1933.[66] This was very gentle treatment compared to what was happening to organizations and individuals to the left of the political center.

There was thus a great deal of overlap between Weimar housewives' organizations and their Nazi successors, both in terms of membership and organization. And there would be substantial continuities in policy, rhetoric, and goals. In the new government, Weimar housewives' leaders finally got a regime that supported many of their goals: the restriction of tropical fruits and the continuation of autarkic consumer policies; the imposition of a mandatory year of service for young women; the certification of "master housewives"; and much more. The National Socialists picked up and carried forward much of the agenda of the Weimar right, taking forward the vision of domesticity

[65] Bertha Hindenberg-Delbrück, "Geistige Ziele der Hausfrauenbewegung," *Mitteilungen des HausFrauenvereins Hannover* 7 (August 1932): 74–6 (italics in original).

[66] For the subsequent careers of many DNVP and DVP female activists after 1933, see Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation*, and Süchtig-Hänger, *Gewissen der Nation*, 362–84.

and housewifery promoted by housewives before 1933. Nazi organizations that dealt with women and family policy would have new and varied sorts of compulsion and persuasion at their disposal, however, as they racialized and expanded the scope of Weimar domestic science programs and policies. The result was that an older vision of German domesticity (now further racialized and often compulsory) was implemented on a broader scale than its creators could have ever imagined.

Conclusion

"Order must be, but not in our house," said the indolent housewife.
From the 1876 edition of the Brockhaus Lexicon of German Sayings

Holidays and traditions sometimes become entrenched within a few years of their creation, as happened in the case of Mother's Day.[1] Domestic practices, however, evolve over decades, linked to changes in social conditions and household technology. German identity altered substantially during the period covered by this book and its domestic aspects continued to evolve after 1945. National identity is still rooted at least in part in the private sphere in Germany today, but many of the particular norms and practices of housekeeping discussed in this book have since disappeared in the face of political, technological, and social changes. More German housewives today purchase frozen foods, for example, than put up their own supplies of fruits and vegetables each fall.

This book has argued that in Germany, a model of household management – defined through particular symbols, practices, and

[1] For the origins of Mother's Day, see Karin Hausen, "Mütter zwischen Geschäftsinteresse und kultischer Verehrung. Der 'Deutsche Muttertag' in der Weimarer Republik," in Gerhard Huck, ed., *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit*, (Wuppertal: Hammer, 1980), 249–80; see also Hausen, "Mothers, Sons and the Sale of Symbols and Goods. The German 'Mother's Day'," in Hans Medick and David W. Sabean, eds., *Interest and Emotion. Essays on the Study of Family and Kinship*, (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 371–413.

objects – developed among the bourgeoisie during the second half of the nineteenth century. These standards and practices had much in common with the life-style developed among the bourgeoisie in other nations because these practices were markers of class identity throughout the West. In Germany, the particular values and practices associated with this style of domesticity became integral to national identity. After 1914, household norms and practices also became part of partisan political debates, as housewives' groups were rapidly absorbed into the world of nationalist politics after 1918. And during the Weimar period, the domestic norms of the bourgeoisie increasingly formed the starting point for a variety of public policies, a trend that accelerated after 1933. The domestic and gendered aspects of German identity were further racialized under the Nazi regime, as a particular approach to homemaking and family life became integral to the Nazi ideal of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Particular aspects of household management were associated with national identity in other contemporary nations, no doubt: but the objects and practices might vary considerably. In a broader sense, domestic values and objects became integral to all European imperialist rhetoric and practices: many domestic norms (cleanliness, modest clothing and orderly homes) became symbols of and justifications for European hegemony around the world.[2] Marjory Morgan's research on nineteenth-century travelers from Great Britain suggests that – when confronted with the life-styles and domestic values of other cultures – English travelers tended to associate such objects as teapots and hearths with Englishness.[3] German identity was associated with somewhat different objects and rituals.

But in Germany, practices and rituals used to define the nation within the public sphere (e.g., a national flag, holiday, or patriotic songs) were only partially successful for a variety of reasons. And such public

[2] See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the role that domesticity played in imperialist rhetoric regarding European superiority.

[3] Morgan's book examines travel literature to discuss how ordinary British travelers used the "others" they encountered abroad to define Englishness, Scottish identity, etc. Domesticity does not seem to have played such a key role as in Germany, but she does find that some domestic practices (particularly associated with tea-drinking rituals) and the notion of "comfort" (achieved through carpets, plenty of fires, etc.) were often invoked to define English identity. See Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 123 and 143.

symbols were changeable, or even not yet determined, during the first half of the twentieth century, as Germany's borders and political systems underwent repeated changes. By contrast, domestic practices and norms were seen as stable and unchanging, and also as essentially German. Domesticity thus provided an "unchanging" foundation for German national identity, an integral part of the repertoire of identities available to Germans (which could also be confessional, regional, or class based) in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The power and appeal that the private sphere had as a basis for identity was grounded precisely in its normalcy. And in their unobtrusiveness and their apparently non-partisan nature, the norms of bourgeois domesticity resembled the other social and cultural accomplishments of the Imperial German bourgeoisie. These included more public phenomena such as the zoological garden or the revised civil code, which also enjoyed widespread support. But unlike some of the other silent victories of the bourgeoisie, the success of the urban bourgeois approach to household management was largely the accomplishment of women, not men.

It was bourgeois women like Lina Morgenstern or Mrs. Sidgwick, after all, who supported and promoted demanding standards for housekeeping and then celebrated the resulting domestic order as being akin to what manufacturers referred to as *deutsche Qualitätsarbeit.* Explaining German home life to an English-speaking audience, Mrs. Sidgwick underscored repeatedly that the domesticity fundamental to German national character was a female accomplishment. Her pride in this showed, for example, in her description of a Berlin acquaintance's home: "She showed me each cupboard and corner of the flat," she wrote after her friend gave her a tour of the apartment, "and I saw everywhere the exquisite order and spotlessness the notable German housewife knows how to maintain."[4]

It was bourgeois leaders of housewives' groups who began to assert during the Weimar period (and even sometimes before) that housewives were a *Stand*, a profession. Bourgeois women's groups began to create domestic science courses in many German cities long before 1914, and began to argue (with some success) that the state should

[4] Sidgwick, *Home Life in Germany*, 135–6. For an additional discussion of the symbolic importance of "snow white" linens, see Wiedemann, *Herrin im Hause.*

make this training mandatory for young women and that employers should offer such instruction to their female employees. By the Weimar period, housewives' leaders were pushing for some sort of state certification or recognition for their work. They were not successful in this before 1933, but did persuade government authorities at many levels to include representatives from housewives' organizations on a variety of government commissions, advisory agencies, and chambers. All of this is evidence that the men of their class were at least partially persuaded of the importance of "quality" household management, and were willing to tacitly concede the validity of bourgeois women's standards for domestic life.

And just as women had pushed domestic science training and the notion of quality housekeeping into public discussions and policy during the Weimar period, they were also instrumental in the implementation of many Nazi social policies that sought to evaluate or intervene in German women's household management after 1933. Nazi female block wardens, female social workers, and district nurses processed the millions of applications for the Mother Cross, flagging those whose housekeeping did not pass muster. Women from a variety of Nazi organizations offered the lush spread of domestic science training courses for women of every age and social background created during the 1930s, and later administered the mandatory "year of service" for German girls. Activists from the Nazi Women's League helped to create and disseminate the enormous propaganda campaigns that sought to reshape German women's shopping and cooking in order to support the Nazi Four-Year Plan. Social workers and activists from the local Nazi Women's League in Bremen helped select disorderly housewives and their families for referral to the Hashude Educational Settlement and oversaw these inmates' daily housekeeping. The massive scope and sometimes compulsory nature of Nazi social policies that intervened in Germans' homes would not have been possible without the support and involvement of tens of thousands of women activists for various Nazi women's affiliate groups.

The enormous programs of classification, expropriation, incarceration, resettlement, deportation, and Germanization undertaken in Poland and the Soviet Union after 1939 also depended on German women's involvement. As Elizabeth Harvey has shown, how voluntary their presence in Poland was varied considerably. Students sent there

to serve a term of service might only be in Poland for a few months and might be unenthusiastic about their work. Others, activists sent by the Nazi People's Welfare or BDM, might have requested assignment to Poland for ideological or opportunistic reasons and stayed there for years. Regardless of their original motives or the length of their assignment, Harvey argues persuasively that there was a widely shared awareness of the fate of deported Jews and Poles among the members of the German occupation, and that many German women had firsthand exposure to Jewish ghettos; some joined in the process of roundups, deportation, and expropriation of the prewar Polish population.[5] Women from Nazi organizations were also instrumental in programs that tried to Germanize formerly Polish or Jewish homes and the ethnic Germans who had been resettled on these properties.

The work of German women sent to Poland went beyond the important sorts of familial support for Nazi men already examined in the work of historians such as Claudia Koonz, Gudrun Schwarz, and Sybille Steinbacher. These scholars and others have examined the ways in which women provided a backdrop of domestic normalcy that supported the careers of Nazi Party members engaged in racial persecution and genocide. Wives or sisters of SS men and others with the occupation forces kept house near or even in the midst of concentration camps, provided emotional and domestic support for those committing atrocities, and were exposed to the information about the fate of the deported Jews and Poles, which was widely shared knowledge among the occupiers. Some of these women also often benefited personally from their privileged positions as members of the SS *Sippengemeinschaft* ("tribal community") or merely as part of the "ruling race."[6] But the social policies examined here (both in Poland and Germany) entailed the engagement of a much larger number of German women, acting in their own right and not as male surrogates: employees of various Nazi women's

[5] Harvey, *Women in the Nazi East*, 294–301.

[6] See Gudrun Schwarz, *Eine Frau an seiner Seite: Ehefrauen in der 'SS-Sippengemeinschaft'* (Hamburg: Hamburger Ed., 1997), 99–169. See also Steinbacher, *"Musterstadt" Auschwitz*, 243–5. See also Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); and for discussions about the debates over female "perpetrators" vs. bystanders, see Adelheid v. Saldern, "Victims or Perpetrators? Controversies about the Role of Women in the Nazi State," in David Crew, ed., *Nazism and German Society, 1933–1945*. (New York: Routledge, 1994)

bureaucracies (e.g.,. the BDM, or the agencies under the leadership of the Nazi Women's League), Nazi women's groups chapter activists across Germany, block wardens, social workers, nurses, teachers, and other professionals.

The involvement of women in creating and implementing Nazi family policy was much more sustained and less dependent on personal familial connections or chance circumstances than any complicity shared by female relatives of the SS or Nazi Party bureaucrats. But this involvement was also lower key, attracting less attention both then and now than that of the "profile" positions occupied by wives and family members of leading Nazi officials. Most of the Nazi programs and initiatives discussed in this book (such as the Mother Cross or the plethora of domestic science courses) were hardly controversial. Like the Hashude camp, however, some could be quite aggressive or coercive. But whether popular or coercive, Nazi policies that sought to reshape private households were extending and manipulating standards of household management that had come to seem normative and desirable long before 1933. The template of domesticity that originated among the urban bourgeoisie had become integral to many Germans' understanding of their national identity even before 1914 and for Nazi officials it was an assumed part of membership in the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Cleanliness, order, thrift, and the other household practices discussed were key to Nazi women's (and many other Germans') understanding of what it meant to be German, and thus became crucial to their efforts to Germanize those resettled under the General Plan East.

German perceptions of the *Volksdeutschen* and their households during World War II were yet another demonstration that domestic standards and practices were central to German identity, but also reflected the fact that these standards evolved over a long period of time. Housekeeping and domestic life continued to change after 1945. Today, a life-style that would have embodied the essence of Germanness to one generation now seems old-fashioned and even (to people on the left) unattractive. This reflects the reality that under every political system, the "public" and the "private" are engaged in an intricate minuet: each helps to define the other and the nation as a whole. And like the nation, German domesticity is still a work in progress.

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