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## **Blurring The Lines between Collaboration and Resistance: Women in Nazi Germany and Vichy and Nazi-Occupied France**

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Blurring the Lines between Resistance and Collaboration: Women in Nazi  
Germany and Vichy and Nazi-Occupied France during World War II

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A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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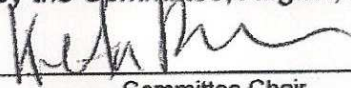
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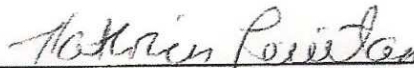
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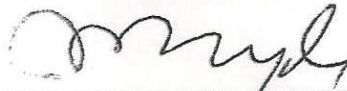


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## ABSTRACT PAGE

In Nazi Germany and Vichy and Nazi-Occupied France during World War II, women were involved in numerous activities that fell upon a spectrum of resistance and collaboration. Although these two categories appear at first glance to be complete opposites, women were able to maneuver their society by going back and forth along the spectrum. Individuals were motivated by their families and loved ones, survival, and ideologies to participate in both resistance and collaboration. Women in particular were able to play upon societal expectations in order to navigate the spectrum. They took a role, often following societal ideas of women being mothers, being overly sexualized, or being less intelligent in order to follow their own agendas. Women also were able to utilize their race in following with the racial expectations of the Nazis to help them reach their goals. Ultimately, the lines between resistance and collaboration become increasingly blurred as women traversed the spectrum, sometimes doing both simultaneously.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Dedications	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Setting the Stage	21
Chapter 2. Motivations	49
Chapter 3. Playing the Part- Navigating the Spectrum	66
Conclusion	97
Bibliography	102

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who have never ceased to push me to chase my dreams.



## Introduction

A beam of light from passing cars scanned the vehicles. The footsteps grew louder and I could hear a woman speaking French and laughing. Then the light from a passing car hit me full in the face and I found myself looking directly into the face of a French woman who was accompanied by a German officer. *Dear God, I thought, I've been caught.*

The woman, dressed in fur with a saucy little hat tilting across one eye, looked directly at me. Then she grabbed the German officer's arm and pointed in the opposite direction. They laughed and the woman put her arms around his neck and pulled him down for a passionate kiss. I felt as if I had been delivered. I released my clenched hand from the running board of the Citroen and quietly sneaked away. I owed my life to the French lady who had seen me, but had distracted the officer instead of pointing at me.<sup>1</sup>

The French woman who appeared as Elisabeth Sevier slashed the tires of several German vehicles along a Parisian street struck fear in the heart of young Elisabeth. She was certain the woman would turn her in. Those who opposed Vichy and the German occupation tended to view the French women who developed relationships with the Germans with scorn and suspicion. Their collaboration was so appalling to some that for one man, French women who had relationships with the Germans "could be dipped in tar and burned in the public

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<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Sevier, *Resistance Fighter: A Teenage Girl in World War II France* (Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1998), 47.

square and it would affect [him] no more than a fire in the fireplace of a neighbor's house.”<sup>2</sup> Those who considered themselves to be resisters punished collaborators and supporters of the Vichy regime even in the final years of the war and in the postwar period. The French tended to publicly humiliate other French women who were romantically involved with Germans and many even had their heads shaved so that everyone would be aware of their crimes. Contemporaries and later historians categorized women as either resisters or collaborators. It is likely that the French woman Sevier encountered would not have escaped being placed within the “collaborator” grouping because of her relationship with the German officer. Not only did she have a relationship with the “enemy” but she probably benefitted from it, judging from her fur coat in a time of scarcity. Yet this woman does not fit snugly into the profile of a collaborator. While her relationship was a form of collaboration, she was also able to use her position to resist, and in turn, save Elisabeth's life. It would be absurd to assume that most women fit neatly into one group. Often women went back and forth between resisting and collaborating; sometimes this was necessary simply to survive.

This thesis examines how women in France and Germany navigated a spectrum of resistance and collaboration during World War II, often moving fluidly throughout the spectrum and even acting on opposing sides simultaneously. I hope to blur the lines that are usually drawn between resistance and collaboration. Although after the war many women were labelled as “resisters” or

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<sup>2</sup> Margaret Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France, 1940-1945* (New York: J. Wiley, 1995), 278.

“victims” on one side, or “collaborators” or “perpetrators” on the other, many women did not fit neatly into these categories and committed various acts of resistance and collaboration in order to survive, protect loved ones, and follow their beliefs. Although I will use the two categories of resistance and collaboration throughout my analysis, I will use them better to unpack, complicate, and ultimately show the blurred lines between the two groups. While their use may perpetuate the myth of dichotomy, the choice of “resistance” instead of “resister,” and “collaboration” instead of “collaborator,” labels their actions instead of creating an identity for these women. I do not wish to perpetuate a stereotype of the good and the bad; instead, I will describe the motivations and actions involved in both resistance and collaboration to provide a more nuanced analysis.

This thesis is organized into three parts: setting the stage, motivations, and navigating the spectrum. The first section establishes female societal expectations and realities. Examining the interwar years reveals continuity in gender concerns from World War I to World War II. Both France and Germany were devastated by massive population loss. The rise of female autonomy made that crisis more threatening. The advancement of the new woman, who was independent in nearly every way, compromised the masculinity of men returning from the front. By the thirties, in both nations, there was a shift toward the right which encouraged women to “return” to the home. This section looks at how differing situations in Germany and France influenced women’s behavior during the war. In both countries, women were involved in politics in the interwar era.

But in Germany women gained suffrage, and the Nazis encouraged them to participate in distinctly female groups. Race also had a different role in both countries, as the Nazis aimed to create a racial state in a way that the French did not. As a result, the implementation of extremely anti-Semitic policies and murders transpired more quickly in Vichy France than in Germany, and thus was much more shocking, perhaps causing more incentive to resist. Finally, this section discusses the images and realities of women in both countries. While women were idealized as stay-at-home mothers in both regimes, women actually remaining at home was not always feasible, especially during war. In both countries, mothers struggled to keep their families alive and also were mobilized into economic and sometimes state positions.

The second section focuses on the motivations of women across the spectrum. Women on all parts of the spectrum tended to act for similar reasons, regardless of the outcome of their actions. Women were motivated by personal convictions, survival, and their relationships. Although men also had similar motivations, societal expectations caused women to be evaluated differently. The expectations of motherhood, especially, influenced how women were scrutinized. Even if women were motivated by motherhood, if their actions did not correspond with societal expectations of good mothering, then they were often judged harshly by others for not being good mothers. Women also tended to physically occupy different spaces from men, making their motivations hit much closer to home. While many men were away from home, for example, women consistently had to find ways to keep their families from starving.

The third section discusses the ways women navigated the spectrum of resistance and collaboration. Women played upon their gender very effectively and had often had more avenues to do so than men. While men involved in the military could use their masculine role in order to resist and collaborate, often just being female was enough to allow women to go through society without much suspicion. Women played upon various female images as they maneuvered war society - the mother and wife, the sexy, seductive woman, and the apolitical and unintelligent woman. None of these images were new to the Vichy or Nazi regimes. They were engrained in both societies. Many women were aware of these images and were able to use them to their advantage. Women were also able to utilize their race and their jobs in order to navigate the spectrum. In any case, perception could easily determine how women were classified; many women may have appeared to be resisting or collaborating while actually doing the exact opposite. While this may have been most problematic during the liberation and after the war when women who collaborated were condemned and punished, it was also important during the war, as appearing to be doing the wrong thing could be detrimental. Having someone to vouch for your intentions could be life-saving, especially for those women who navigated opposing sides of the spectrum.

Most of my research relies on primary sources, including journals, diaries, memoirs, and interviews collected by other historians. Of course, this can be immensely problematic as it is possible that women exaggerated or outright lied about their experiences. There were many reasons for people to engage in self-

defense or deny their actions. Especially considering that many chose to publish significantly after the war, what they wrote essentially determined their reputation and whether they would be placed in the category of collaborator or resister. Regardless of the accuracy of their accounts, their stories demonstrate the blurred reality between resistance and collaboration as well as how women were able to manipulate gender expectations.

### ***The Spectrum of Collaboration and Resistance***

Collaboration and resistance were fluid; similar motivations and actions permeated both sides. In both societies, women were pressed to be mothers, to be moral centers of society, to get married and be good wives. Many of those women who both collaborated and resisted did so for their family or their relationships, thus fitting into their expectations of women. Yet this was ignored after the war and turned on its head. During the Nazi regime in Germany and the war in France, the government (and some of the general population) considered women who collaborated to be good mothers. The government awarded those most embodying the ideal mother and used them as an example for other women. It was believed that those who resisted were neglecting their female duties. After the war, however, this reversed, turning the once admired collaborators into terrible women, and the previously scorned resisters into heroines.

The idea that levels of resistance and collaboration fall along a spectrum plays an important role in this project. The extreme ends of the spectrum involve atrocities committed in concentration camps and women risking their lives for

resistance activities. As each side inches inward on the spectrum, the acts become less and less severe, yet can still be labeled as resistance or collaboration. The area in the middle is more of a gray zone, neither distinctly collaboration nor resistance. However, it is not only possible for women to fluctuate in the middle; many women also drastically shifted positions on the spectrum, at some points clearly resisting and at others blatantly collaborating. While it is difficult to place individual women on specific points of the spectrum, the existence of it is imperative, as it demonstrates that the acts and consequences of resistance and collaboration varied and that people were not stuck on one side or the other. To judge all acts as if they were on the extreme ends of the spectrum, as many have, perpetuates a lack of understanding.

The dichotomous use of resistance and collaboration began with contemporaries and infected later historiography. This was most obvious in France, as a mostly occupied nation (Vichy was run by the French until the Germans completely occupied the “Free Zone” in 1942.) Although it did take a couple years for organized resistance groups to emerge, there was a clear societal understanding of the difference between resistance and collaboration. Agnes Humbert, a member of the French resistance, noted that as soon as the Germans arrived in Paris there was a tangible change in people. She commented that “it is not I who have taken leave of my senses - it is they who have gone mad,” sensing very early on a difference between those who resisted and those who acquiesced to German occupation.<sup>3</sup> As in Germany, there were

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<sup>3</sup> Agnes Humbert, *Resistance: A Woman's Journal of Struggle and Defiance in Occupied France*. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 11.

strict measures put into place to deal with any opposition to the state. Particularly sensitive was the notion of horizontal collaboration, as sleeping with the enemy posed a threat to the French family itself.<sup>4</sup> The French often considered women seen with the Germans to be collaborators from early on in the occupation. One woman was scorned by her neighbors who saw her with a German; she in turned threatened to denounce them for their insults. However, after liberation this woman was under threat by the very neighbors she had previously endangered.<sup>5</sup> In the historiography of these women, often the titles alone demonstrate the continuing contrasting images of resister and collaborator. There are multiple books written on the heroism of the female resistance in occupied France, and very few written on collaboration. If the two categories are discussed in the same work, it is often to contrast them, not to draw comparisons. In Germany, the contrast between perpetrator and victim was also very clear. Laws were put in place to squash opposition to the regime, and Germans lived in daily fear of being denounced by a neighbor. Racial prejudices made the distinction between the two even greater, as Jews and other undesirables were discriminated against while Aryans were strongly encouraged to join the Nazis.

The subjective perception of contemporaries has often influenced how women were categorized. Sometimes women's actions were viewed out of context by other individuals, thus affirming that a particular woman was

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: Daily Life in the Heart of France during the German Occupation* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 51.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life Under the Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 178.



collaborating when she may have in fact been resisting. In a sense, women often acted as double agents, although not always on a professional level. Women were able to play upon multiple identities, assuming the one most suitable for their goals, and basing a large part of their success upon these constructed identities. A woman could appear to be collaborating while on a mission of resistance, or could be collaborating while looking as though she were resisting. French women would flirt with Germans to get past checkpoints with weapons for the resistance, and Jewish Jew-catchers would pretend to help other Jewish people only to turn them into the Gestapo. In this instance women could be simultaneously on both sides of the spectrum, depending on how they were perceived by different individuals. Without proper verification, women could face the consequences of being involved in one group even if they were really part of the other. This is, of course, problematic for historians, as it is difficult to classify individuals based on the perceptions of others.

Of course, the spectrum and fluidity of collaboration and resistance does not apply strictly to women. Men, too, operated along a spectrum, and in some instances played on multiple roles at once, just as women did. Karma Rabaut recalled in an interview with Alison Owings that her father “was very friendly with ‘appearance Nazis’” whom she described as being “very brown on the outside and... a completely different color inside” indicating that it was not unheard of for individuals to appear to be more Nazi-like than they truly were.<sup>6</sup> The assassination attempt of Hitler on July 20, 1944, was enacted by men reasonably

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<sup>6</sup> Alison Owings, *Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 347.

close to Hitler. Colonel von Stauffenberg had brought the explosive into a meeting he was to attend with Hitler without the Führer suspecting a thing. Hitler's secretary recalled that "no one had suspected that an officer on Hitler's own staff could be the assassin."<sup>7</sup> This man was able to be part of Hitler's system while simultaneously plotting against him. But the spaces in which men and women could act on the spectrum differed. Women were able to utilize their gender to their advantage- simply being female was a disguise that men did not have. Women had more fluid lives of resistance and collaboration because they remained on the home front, whereas many men had been called off to the fronts or to forced labor abroad, making their experiences completely different. Even men within organized resistance groups had to work more discreetly than women, as their gender alone made them more suspicious. The *Maquis*, a major resistance organization in France, was started when men refused to be a part of forced labor in Germany and had to go into hiding in the woods, making them less able to function inconspicuously in society. Thus, women often occupied not only different social spaces, but different geographical spaces than men, making their story of participation along the spectrum very different.

By showing how the categories of collaboration and resistance were not black and white, but instead fluid, I hope to foster more of an understanding of how various women responded differently to the Nazis and Vichy while following similar ideals. Women could end up on completely opposite sides of the spectrum while trying to help their families or survive, making similar motivations

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<sup>7</sup> Traudl Junge, *Until the Final Hour: Hitler's Last Secretary* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2004), 132.

result in very different outcomes. This thesis examines the women who do not fit easily into either side of the debate. I am not attempting to lessen the value of the women who bravely fought against their respective regimes, often risking their lives, nor am I trying to make excuses for women who did abhorrent things as accomplices of their regimes. Rather, I am interested in how women participated in a variety of resistance and collaboration activities, not only going back and forth between the two but sometimes using one to enable the other. I will also examine how gender affected women's ability to go back and forth by playing upon their prescribed roles within society.

### ***Historiography***

The historiographies of Nazi Germany and Vichy and Nazi-Occupied France are nationally based and rarely interact with one another in one work, especially when analyzing women. The historiography of women in Nazi Germany generally discusses perpetrators and victims, whereas in France women are divided into collaborators and resisters. This paper chooses to apply the concepts of collaboration and resistance to both countries because these terms better illuminate female agency. Collaboration also encompasses less direct forms of participation and is not meant strictly in the political sense of working with an occupying force, but instead in the context of working together with the state and those mirroring state goals. Resistance implies that women were not automatically victimized if they did not collaborate and that they often chose to fight back.

The historiography of women in Nazi Germany focuses on the dichotomy of women as perpetrators and victims. Most often, women tend to be divided into categories of “Aryan” German women, who were perpetrators, and the victims of the Nazi regimes or those involved in the resistance organizations. However, Gisela Bock (1984) argues that all women under the Nazi regime were victimized because of how the Nazis tied together racism and sexism.<sup>8</sup> She claims that women who were considered to be “valuable” were forced into “compulsory motherhood” while those deemed inferior were forced to undergo sterilization, therefore taking away female agency.<sup>9</sup> Claudia Koonz (1987), on the other hand, contends that many German women fell into the category of perpetrators.<sup>10</sup> She argues that Nazi women contributed to the regime through their female roles within their homes and communities. Koonz notes that “mothers and wives directed by Gertrud Scholtz-Klink made a vital contribution to Nazi power by preserving the illusion of love in an environment of hatred” essentially allowing Nazism to thrive by their support at home.<sup>11</sup> Thus, women made a significant contribution to the functioning of the regime. While this earlier scholarship focused on women as perpetrators or victims mostly within the home, more recent scholarship pays more attention to women as perpetrators directly involved in the crimes of the Holocaust, in part due to an expansion of the literature into the role of women in the Nazi east. Wendy Lower (2013), in

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<sup>8</sup> Gisela Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State” in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* eds. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman, and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism,” 275.

<sup>10</sup> Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, The Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 17.

particular, analyzes how women participated as witnesses, accomplices, and perpetrators in the east.<sup>12</sup> This work is important as it demonstrates that women took part in various levels of perpetratorship. There are a few works that address women as victims within Nazi Germany, and most focus on women in the concentration camps.<sup>13</sup> There are also a few books about women in the resistance in Germany, which constitutes another victim group. Often they are only incorporated into a small chapter of a book or are examined only in reference to men involved in a resistance organization.<sup>14</sup>

The historiography of women in Vichy and occupied France instead focuses on the dichotomy of resister and collaborator. There are many more works on how women resisted the Nazis and Vichy, perhaps demonstrating not only more flexibility to do so in an occupied nation but also an attempt to avoid the reality of collaboration in the nation's historiography. Caroline Moorehead (2011) and Margaret Rossiter (1986) have both written books on the French *résistantes*, both of which capture how women played an important role in the French resistance and often used their gender to their advantage, even to some

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<sup>12</sup> Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Killing Fields* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust*. Eds. Elizabeth Bauer and Myrna Goldenberg. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003.); *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust*. Ed. Carol Rittner and John K. Roth. (Minnesota: Paragon House, 1993); *Women in the Holocaust*. Ed. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)

<sup>14</sup> Dorothee von Meding, *Courageous Hearts: Women and the anti-Hitler Plot of 1944* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997). This work addresses women whose husbands were involved in the assassination plot, noting that these "women were not involved in active 'resistance' in the strict sense." (xii) A chapter entitled "Courage and Choice: Women who Said No" in Koonz's work also discusses female resistance briefly. Interestingly enough, this theme is almost reversed in the French scholarship; there will be small chapters about collaboration in the midst of a whole work on resistance. Most of the books about female German resistance are memoirs.

extent playing a part to get what they wanted.<sup>15</sup> Paula Schwartz (1989) discusses how women were particularly active in the resistance, noting that their work was perhaps more dangerous but that they were essentially “invisible agents” within society because of their gender.<sup>16</sup> It is much more difficult to find scholarship on women as collaborators in France; they often only appear as chapters in the major works about female resistance to draw a sharp contrast to the heroines. Fabrice Virgili (2002) is one of the few to write specifically on French female collaboration, although his work is more focused on the aftermath, in particular on *les tondues* (shorn women).<sup>17</sup> He addresses how the crimes of those accused of collaboration varied immensely, demonstrating the spectrum along which women fell.

A comparative history that addresses women in both nations is possible, especially because both countries placed such a strong emphasis on motherhood. Motherhood not only influenced how many women chose to act, as many identified with that image, but also how they were evaluated by contemporaries and historians alike. In Nazi Germany, motherhood was linked to the racist ideology of the state, not just to patriarchal authority. As Gisela Bock argues, “Nazis were by no means simply interested in raising the number of childbearing women. They were just as bent on excluding many women from

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<sup>15</sup> Caroline Moorehead, *A Train in Winter: An Extraordinary Story of Women, Friendship, and Resistance in Occupied France*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011); Margaret Rossiter, *Women in the Resistance* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> Paula Schwartz, “Partisanes and Gender Politics in Vichy France.” *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 1 (1989)

<sup>17</sup> Fabrice Virgili, *Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France* (New York: Berg, 2002).

bearing and rearing children” if deemed to be inferior.<sup>18</sup> While Aryan motherhood became a central image for Nazi Germany, it was entangled with racial ideology. Miranda Pollard’s monograph *Reign of Virtue* (1998), influenced by Joan Scott’s call for gender history, argues that women in Vichy France played an important role in the private sphere. She argues that “women were key actors” in Vichy France’s aims. They were necessary to the reproduction of the population, and the regime used clear gender normative conceptions of “men as producers [and] women as reproducers” in its rhetoric to create a stronger nation.<sup>19</sup> Thus, motherhood had immense value in France as a means of making France more powerful. Pollard examines how the separate roles of women and men, in keeping with Nazi ideology but also the ideals of the French, played an imperative role in how women participated in France during the Second World War. While both countries promoted the notion of motherhood, the Germans combined it more with racist ideology. Both the Germans and the French promoted an idealized image of the woman as the mother. This contrasted sharply to the “new woman” which arose after the Great War. The concept of motherhood has been a driving force in the interpretation of women’s roles in collaboration and resistance in both regimes.

The terms resistance and collaboration can easily be applied to the situation in Germany, even though it was not occupied. Opposition often meant resistance, which was present, though minimal, in Germany. As Christabel

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<sup>18</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism,” 273.

<sup>19</sup> Miranda Pollard. *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 6.

Bielenberg wrote in her memoirs, organized resistance movements did not thrive in Germany as in Nazi occupied areas. Perhaps this in part contributes to an aversion towards the categories of resistance and collaboration. Yet this did not mean that resistance did not occur. As Bielenberg notes, “even gestures like not rendering the obligatory so-called Hitler salute or sharing political jokes were in their way instruments of resistance.”<sup>20</sup> The idea of the collaborator also makes more sense than that of the perpetrator when examining women, as many women were not necessarily in positions where they had direct state involvement. The concept of collaboration was not absent in Germany. Melita Maschmann notes in her memoir that after failing to turn in her Jewish friend to the Gestapo her “unsuitability for collaboration with them was doubtless thoroughly proven.”<sup>21</sup> A sense of working together, or collaboration, with the Nazis was necessary to the functioning of the state. Perhaps historians are hesitant to use the term because it is often applied to occupied nations and thus may appear to take blame away from the Germans. But in its simplest definition of working together, collaboration is applicable to Germans.

The historiography of resistance and collaboration addresses the definitions of the terms themselves. Gerhard Hirschfeld has argued that “the modern concept of collaboration was born on 24 October 1940 at a memorable meeting between the German Führer Adolf Hitler and Maréchal Philippe Pétain”

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<sup>20</sup> Christabel Bielenberg, *When I was a German, 1934-1945: an Englishwoman in Nazi Germany* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Melita Maschmann, *Account Rendered: A Dossier on my Former Self* (Abelard-Schuman, 1965), 44.



when the two men made the fateful decision to work together.<sup>22</sup> However, collaboration did not only occur on a political level. Fabrice Virgili notes that French women were deemed collaborators for belonging to different categories: “political, where they had belonged to a collaborationist organization or, more modestly, had held opinions in favor of the enemy or shown opposition to the Resistance and allied forces; financial, if they had benefited from professional or business contacts; [or] personal, if they had relationships with members of the occupying forces.”<sup>23</sup> Similar categories also characterized German women who were convicted of collaboration, although German women were more likely to also hold positions within the state structure. Relationships were also a cause for being deemed a collaborator, although this was usually only the case if the relationship was with a high-ranking Nazi or, in some cases, the Allies after they invaded at the end of the war. For this paper, collaboration will be defined as any action that involves cooperation with the regime, whether political or personal, and it also includes those individuals who led lives of indifference. By not opposing, it was possible to take advantage of the benefits while allowing the regime to function. In these terms, collaboration does not necessarily hold a negative connotation. It was possible for individuals to collaborate without possessing ill intentions. Collaborating also did not consequently place everyone on the far end of the spectrum in which their actions had excessively dire ramifications.

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<sup>22</sup> Gerhard Hirschfeld, “Collaboration in Nazi-Occupied France: Some Introductory Remarks” in *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture during the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1944* ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld and Patrick Marsh (Oxford: Berg, 1989), 2.

<sup>23</sup>Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 11.

Resistance has been a term even more contested by historians. Raul Hilberg's early scholarship argued that resistance involves arms, but this definition is far too constricting.<sup>24</sup> Yehuda Bauer has described resistance as "any *group* action consciously taken in opposition to the Nazis," which broadens participation more, but still excludes many unorganized and individual acts of resistance.<sup>25</sup> Vera Laska's definition is most helpful for this paper. She argues that "resistance or underground activities covered a wide range of actions, from passive resistance in not viewing a German film, to outright guerrilla warfare against the invaders."<sup>26</sup> This definition is most appropriate for analyzing women who were involved in organized resistance. But it applies even more so to individual acts by women who made up the majority of the population at home during the war. For this paper, resistance will be defined as any act against the Nazis or Vichy, regardless of size or impact, that reflected an attempt to change the status quo. Both of these terms are defined broadly as even the smallest act could easily be collaboration or resistance. By implementing a broad terminology it is easier to understand how women both resisted and collaborated.

Although other terminology is critical to understanding how resistance and collaboration affected everyday lives, resistance and collaboration are actions while other terms classify individuals. The debate about bystanders, and to what extent they were responsible for the atrocities that occurred, largely comes down

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<sup>24</sup> Raul Hilberg, "Two Thousand Years of Jewish Appeasement" in *The Holocaust*, ed. Donald L. Niewyk (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011), 144.

<sup>25</sup> Yehuda Bauer, "Forms of Jewish Resistance" in *The Holocaust*, ed. Donald L. Niewyk (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011), 151

<sup>26</sup> Vera Laska, "Resistance" in *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust*, ed. Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1993), 252.

to how individuals chose to participate. Everyday choices were also acts of resistance or collaboration. One cannot simply stand by; one has to resist or collaborate to some degree. Levels of complicity are also pertinent and can be highlighted by the concept of a spectrum. The actions on the farther ends of the scale automatically assume more responsibility than acts in the middle. The debate over the complicity of individuals, especially in relation to bystanders, is important to an overall picture of resistance and collaboration, but for the purpose of this thesis, resistance and collaboration encompass those other terms.

There are pitfalls to this comparative history. Not only does this piece compare two different countries, but it also compares resistance and collaboration, which have often been considered to be complete opposites: one good and one evil. There are thus moral conundrums that arise in this comparison. After all, it is somewhat difficult to compare a woman in Nazi Germany who was conscripted to work at a labor camp and a woman in France who chose to collaborate with the Germans in return for luxury goods. It is even more difficult to compare a woman who willingly went into the camp system and tortured people and a woman who risked her life in a resistance network defying Nazi values. By analyzing women in both countries, it is possible to gain insight into the possibilities and limits of female agency under Nazi rule. Within their respective historiographies, women in both France and Germany have begun to gain an acknowledgement of agency, yet it is not well dispersed. Female collaboration in Nazi Germany has been treated on a much greater plane, leaving the snug domestic sphere and branching out into direct involvement in

Nazi crimes, even going east. The east was a place for “ambitious young women” to advance their careers, and Lower argues that “women in the eastern territories witnessed and committed atrocities in a more open system, and as part of what they saw as a professional opportunity and a liberating experience.”<sup>27</sup> Work on female resistance in Germany, however, is scarce. This may be in part due to the original perpetrator/victim contrast, which viewed many women as victims instead of actively involved. The opposite is true of French scholarship. Unlike the perpetrators in Nazi Germany, French female collaborators are rarely given much sense of agency by scholars. However, the treatment of female resisters in French literature has increasingly demonstrated female agency. Historians such as Moorehead and Rossiter discuss how women played upon their roles in society to resist, thus using their feminine expectations to get past Vichy and the Germans. This thesis therefore merges these two historiographies into the terms of resistance and collaboration by demonstrating the agency women had on both sides, rather than using the terminology to be restrictive. An analysis of women in both of these roles can reveal how fluid these categories were and how women actively shaped their situations.

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<sup>27</sup>Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 9.

## Setting the Stage

The political life of France and Germany was different in the interwar years. In France, the interwar years were a time of turmoil, with a constant turnover of governments, especially in the 1930s. Right after the war, republicanism was particularly strong in France under Raymond Poincaré and Georges Clemenceau's leadership. However, the Maurrasian movement that dominated the 1920s steered many away from these republican ideals. By the 1930s, there was an obvious struggle between the left and right that eventually led to the implementation of the right-wing Vichy government. By 1932, the left had returned to power under Herriot, although only for an unstable two year period.<sup>28</sup> By 1934, there were many riots and problems within the regime, exacerbated by the Depression, and the right was able to reclaim authority. Yet by 1936 the Radicals came together with the Communists to take control with the Popular Front. This regime focused on the working class, as well as other social reforms that the officials felt desperately needed attention.<sup>29</sup> Yet as power switched from the communists to the radicals, interest in collaboration was lost. Two years later, the Popular Front had essentially disintegrated and was replaced with a more moderate right in 1938. By 1940, France had become increasingly unstable, and Vichy was ready to begin its rule as the last government of the Third Republic.

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<sup>28</sup> Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times: From the Enlightenment to the Present. Fifth Edition* (New York: W. W. & Norton Company, 1995) 355.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, *France in Modern Times*, 367.

In Germany, however, by World War II there was a strong government that had been in place since 1933. As a democratic form of government, the Weimar Republic proved for the most part fairly unstable. Although there were a few years of prosperity, it was often associated with economic turmoil. This had subsided by the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. Unlike in France where there was frequent political turnover, the Nazis solidified their goals and policies in the years before the war. As a result, many Germans identified with the Nazis and were extremely loyal to them, especially those who had grown up with programs such as the Hitler Youth and League of German Maidens. Women were quite supportive of the Nazis in their rise to power, as indicated by voting records. Helen L. Boak points out that “by March 1933 the NSDAP received a larger share of the female than of the male vote,”<sup>30</sup> The French did not have the same loyalty to the Vichy government and obviously not to the German occupiers, hence women collaborated and resisted differently in both countries. Women in Germany who genuinely believed in the Nazi cause went to much greater lengths to support Nazi racial goals in the east, an impossibility for French women even if they had a similar ideology. Resentment of occupation in France led to more organized resistance groups than were possible in Germany, giving French women more chance to participate in organized resistance movements, something that was nearly impossible in Germany.

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<sup>30</sup> Helen L. Boak, “Our Last Hope’: Women’s Votes for Hitler: A Reappraisal” in *German Studies Review* 12, No. 2 (1989), 297.

## ***Gender and the Interwar Years***

In both France and Germany, perceived gender crises following World War I influenced how women were expected to act, and thus how society idealized them. An emphasis on family and domestic values meant that women could act the role of mother, and hide behind what society *wanted* women to be. A perceived crisis in gender roles had consumed France for several decades preceding Vichy. Mary Louise Roberts argues that after the First World War, “by debating issues of gender identity the French came to terms with a postwar world that threatened to become unrecognizable to them.”<sup>31</sup> Following the First World War, Roberts emphasizes, societal anxieties placed women within two categories: the mother and the “modern woman.”<sup>32</sup> The image of the mother proved to be particularly important during the interwar years and would continue with a fury into the Vichy regime. As Roberts notes, the image of the mother was not new within France, but was “old, multilayered, and complex in meaning.”<sup>33</sup> This became entangled in a heightened nationalism after the Great War, which encouraged the repopulation of France after the drastic loss of men. Joshua Cole argues that population paralleled national power, making mothers a key player in national reconstruction. He states that “as the family became an object of both intensified philanthropic activity and legislative reform, women increasingly found their contribution to society measured by their success or

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<sup>31</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1924* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 7.

<sup>32</sup> Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*, 89.

failure as mothers.”<sup>34</sup> Mothers were not only imperative to rebuilding France demographically, but also to restoring a societal ideal. After returning from war, many men feared losing their masculinity, especially in the light of the “modern woman.” Motherhood for women was not only expected, but more importantly, it was hoped for, which gave potency to a shield behind which women could resist and collaborate during Vichy. Motherhood gave them much needed protection.

The “modern woman” posed a problematic counterpoint to motherhood during the interwar years. As Roberts argues, the “modern woman” was essentially an overly sexualized woman who at the same time was almost completely stripped of her sex. She was “a ‘being’ without a waist, without hips, and without breasts, she symbolized a civilization without churches, without palaces, without sexes.”<sup>35</sup> Interestingly enough, Roberts also points to the link between the fear of infidelity and the “modern woman,” referencing many literary works such as Henri Barbusse’s *Le Feu* written in 1916. At one point, a soldier was able “to sneak through enemy lines to return to see his wife in occupied territory.... His happiness at being able to know her condition turned to shock and dismay when he discovered her in the company of a German soldier: ‘She was smiling. She was contented. She had the look of being well off, by the side of the *boche* officer.’”<sup>36</sup> The fears that the modern woman posed during the First World War and the interwar years fed into fears of female collaboration during the aftermath of Vichy. Women who were thought to have had relations with the

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<sup>34</sup> Joshua Cole, *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics and Gender in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 15.

<sup>35</sup> Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*, 28.



Germans were placed in a similarly threatening light and were increasingly correlated with a sense of national disgrace and betrayal.

Family values were stressed throughout the interwar period, as part of the French nation's efforts to rebuild the population and create a strong society. By restoring the importance to family, men could once again retain their masculine status, but only within the framework of traditional family roles. An emphasis on family continued through the Vichy years. The roles of women as mothers, wives, and caregivers reaffirmed the family focus, detracting from female labor although many women still were in the workforce. Unfortunately, women were seen as contributing to the problem of unemployment in the 1930s by essentially taking the jobs of men.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, women in many ways were blamed for the perceived fall of the French nation; not only did their employment weaken the ability of men to be the sufficient, manly breadwinners for their families, but their failure to sacrifice and produce enough was also often blamed for France's initial defeat. As Pétain declared, there had been "too few children, too few arms, too few Allies."<sup>38</sup> To correct this, women had to be placed in the home at the center of efforts to establish a better French nation without distraction from the outside world of men. The paternalistic ideals of the late 1930s and the Third Republic continued into the period of Vichy and the Occupation, using past family based codes to enforce laws that actually promoted mothers staying at home and out of the work force.<sup>39</sup> The addition to the Family Code in 1938 with the return of a

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<sup>37</sup> Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 44.

<sup>39</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 153.

moderate right group gave favor to “families with three or more children when the mother remained at home.”<sup>40</sup> After this shift to the right, Vichy expanded on these policies, drawing away from the leftist policies of earlier groups in power.

In Germany, there were similar gender anxieties in the interwar era. As in France, Germany lost a large number of men during World War I and many of those who returned were physically maimed. As Sabine Kienitz argues, “the approximately 2.7 million disabled in Germany had lost more than just the use of their bodies.... [they] were robbed of the security of culturally transmitted bodily certainties by the war. This security was part of their masculine identity.”<sup>41</sup> Many have argued that men returned to Germany “not as heroes, but damaged in body and spirit.”<sup>42</sup> While many men were struggling to regain a sense of masculinity, women found the aftermath of the war years to be fairly liberating. Like in France, the new, modern woman - “more self-confident, more experienced, hardened, more independent, more difficult to control” - was becoming more of a reality in the Weimar years.<sup>43</sup> As Birthe Kundrus notes, women during the war were given above all “the *possibility* of [being] an economically, socially, politically and sexually independent woman.” This “new autonomy seemed to strike at the foundations of yet another cornerstone of masculinity - its domination over the feminine and over women.”<sup>44</sup> Yet despite the emergence of the new

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<sup>40</sup> Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 153.

<sup>41</sup> Sabine Kienitz, “Body Damage: War Disability and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany” in *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Berg, 2002), 187.

<sup>42</sup> Birthe Kundrus, “Gender Wars: The First World War and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Weimar Republic” in *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Berg, 2002), 159.

<sup>43</sup> Kundrus, “Gender Wars,” 163.

<sup>44</sup> Kundrus, “Gender Wars,” 164-165.

woman after the Great War policies were still not in place to favor these women. New laws made it more likely for soldiers to be hired and compromised the ability of married women to work by invoking a campaign against “dual-earners.”<sup>45</sup>

A push towards the *Hausfrau* existed before the Nazis came to power, but they utilized terminology in keeping with the modern woman to attract followers. They campaigned for the idea of “camaraderie” between the sexes, well aware of the support that they would need from both men and women to create a racially pure state.<sup>46</sup> The Nazis quickly made it clear that the ideal place for women was at home, acting as a wife and mother. This was imperative not only to forming a larger population, which as Cole argues correlated to a sense of national power, but in particular to creating a strong Aryan state. As Bock argues, the importance of the mother in establishing a strong state was nothing new in terms of “race hygiene.... Since the end of the nineteenth century.... Women have been hailed as ‘mothers of the race’, or, in stark contrast, vilified as the ones guilty of ‘racial degeneration.’”<sup>47</sup> Nazi women tended to bond together under a shared notion of race and sex, and as Claudia Koonz argues, sought to create their own *lebensraum*. She notes that “Nazi women called for ‘more masculine men’ and ‘more feminine women’” in hopes of giving women more control in their “female sphere” including “social welfare, education, culture, health care, and community organization” in addition to their homes.<sup>48</sup> While the more modern

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<sup>45</sup> Kundrus, “Gender War,” 171.

<sup>46</sup> Kundrus, “Gender War,” 169.

<sup>47</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism,” 272.

<sup>48</sup> Claudia Koonz, “The Competition for Women’s *Lebensraum*, 1928-1934” in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* eds. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman, and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 213.

woman was able to flourish in the twenties, by the thirties politics in both states became increasingly conservative. The ideal Nazi woman - Aryan race, without makeup, at home with children - starkly contrasted with the new woman who was economically and sexually independent and often depicted wearing makeup and smoking. In both nations, the desire to see women as wives and mothers in many ways enabled women to navigate the spectrum without suspicion.

### ***Racial Policies***

While race did become important in both France and Germany, the timeline of racial discrimination based on Nazi ideology was drastically different in the two countries, perhaps leading to a difference in how women reacted to the regime. As Omer Bartov argues, there were several differences between France and Germany in the interwar years that greatly influenced how the war years played out. While the Great War instilled a sense of mourning into the French population and a desire to “avoid any future carnage,” in Germany the effect was almost the opposite: a need to “reverse the verdict of the past and bring to the nation the glory it had lost by defeat and betrayal.”<sup>49</sup> These two very different social and political outlooks greatly impacted how the two nations developed in the interwar years, and how the two societies reacted to the Nazi regime. In Germany, there was a need “to banish the polluting elements that had caused defeat” by creating a “racial community” that would get rid of domestic and foreign enemies.<sup>50</sup> While Bartov argues that in France there was “no consensus”

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<sup>49</sup> Omer Bartov, “Social Outcasts in War and Genocide: A Comparative Perspective” in *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* Eds. Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 295.

<sup>50</sup> Bartov, “Social Outcasts,” 296.

as to the identity of their “domestic enemies,” the “racial community” that became so important in post-war Germany made it easy to “increasingly attribute” defeat “to the Jews.”<sup>51</sup>

Race helped to create a community of the German people, through both the glorification of the Aryan race and an exclusion of the races that the Nazis deemed “inferior.” As Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus argue, “the identification, the treatment, and even the pace of their persecution of political opponents and social outsiders illustrated that the Nazis attuned their law-and-order policies to German society” as part of the “community of the people.”<sup>52</sup> Although Jews were by no means the only target of the Nazis, anti-Semitic policies became a staple of the Nazi regime. As early as April of 1933, the Law for the Restoration of Professional Civil Service “made it easy to purge Jews and others from the civil service.”<sup>53</sup> Jewish individuals were able to “live a relatively ‘normal’ existence” up until 1938, although there were various points of persecution between 1933 and 1938.<sup>54</sup> In this way, the lead-up to the final solution was much more gradual in Germany than it was in France. Gellately notes that “as the months passed, pushing the Jews out became easier for many Germans to stomach, especially when they saw that doing so made available Jewish jobs, businesses, and property.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Bartov, “Social Outcasts,” 298.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, “Social Outsiders and the Construction of the Community of People” in *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* Eds. Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>53</sup> Gellately and Stoltzfus, “Social Outsiders”, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Gellately and Stoltzfus, “Social Outsiders”, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Gellately and Stoltzfus, “Social Outsiders”, 6.

In France, however, the shift from moderate anti-Semitism to murder was much quicker. As Bartov notes, in France, despite a rise of anti-Semitic sentiment in the 1930s, it was not until Pétain “tried to present the nation as a victim of its domestic enemies, among whom the Jews featured most prominently” that the Jews became a specific target of the regime.<sup>56</sup> Susan Zuccotti argues that before the war in France, most prejudice targeted foreigners, not French Jews. Especially due to policies put into place in Germany, France received an influx of around 50,000 “anti-Nazi and left-wing refugees from the Third Reich” between 1933 and 1939 - about half of whom were Jewish. While only approximately 10,000 of these 50,000 of these refugees chose to stay in France, “the newcomers provoked suspicion among French citizens fearful of being dragged into another war.”<sup>57</sup>

Zuccotti points to the drastically different experiences that French Jews and foreign Jews had in France during the interwar years. Gaby Cohen, a French Jew, did not recall ever having problems as a result of her perceived race in the 1930s. In fact, she instead remembered that her “non-Jewish friends and neighbors used to scold us if we didn’t respect and observe the Jewish holidays.”<sup>58</sup> Other French Jews recalled similar memories. Foreign Jews, however, often noted that they were physically abused and taunted for their faith and their foreign origins.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Bartov, “Social Outsiders”, 298.

<sup>57</sup> Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, The French, and the Jews* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 25.

<sup>58</sup> Zuccotti, *The Holocaust*, 28.

<sup>59</sup> Zuccotti, *The Holocaust*, 29.

Yet under the Vichy regime and the Nazi occupation, all Jews found themselves in a perilous situation. As early as October, 1940 Vichy enacted its first “*Statut des Juifs*.” This law “broadened the German definition of who was Jewish” and “excluded Jews from public service, the officer corps of the armed force, teaching, journalism, the theater, radio, and cinema.”<sup>60</sup> Zuccotti acknowledges that such laws were put into place without German pressure - their origins were distinctly French. By 1942, the French began rounding up Jews and sending them to their deaths - less than two years after armistice and the implementation of the first Vichy anti-Semitic laws. The more rapid pace of these policies in France may have made the inhumanity of the situation more obvious and possibly led to more involved resistance, especially when French Jews were targeted. Perhaps this explains why German women tended to be more involved and enthusiastic in racial crimes, although by no means were French women completely uninvolved.

### ***Image and Reality: Motherhood and Survival***

While both Germany and France emphasized motherhood, the real struggle to survive during the war threatened this ideal. Both the Nazi and Vichy regimes held similar ideas of what women should be like, and both regimes heavily pushed for women to fit within these roles. Most important was for women to be mothers; it was their job to rebuild both nations by having children. In Germany, the *Hausfrau* was idealized, and in France, its counterpart, the *femme au foyer*, was just as important to the state image. In 1934, Hitler stated

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<sup>60</sup> Zuccotti, *The Holocaust*, 56.

that “What a man offers in heroism on the field of battle, woman equals with unending perseverance and sacrifice.... Every child she brings into the world is a battle, a battle she wages for the existence of her people.”<sup>61</sup> The ideal of female self-sacrifice crossed borders into France as well. On Mother’s Day in 1941, Maréchal Pétain addressed the mothers of France: “Mothers of France, hear this long cry of love that rises toward you. Mothers of our dead, mothers of our cities who give your lives to save your children from hunger; mothers of the countryside who, alone, on the farm, bring in the harvest, praiseworthy mothers and suffering mothers, I extend to you today all the appreciation of France.”<sup>62</sup> These words from Petain show not only a reverence for mothers, but also a growing awareness that the *femme au foyer* was not always practical, as mothers had to find ways to keep their children alive, often through work. Both regimes expected women to be self-sacrificing mothers, to help their nation achieve greatness once more, and to become mothers for the state. While the idea of women as mothers was nothing new, in both regimes motherhood was placed in the public sphere more than it had been before. Both focused on returning women to their mythical and “natural” place within the home.

However, despite the shared value placed on motherhood, Germany added a racial component that was not present in France. Only those considered “valuable” in Germany were encouraged to reproduce. As Gisela Bock argues, racism and sexism were entangled, creating a regime in which “prohibition of abortion and compulsory sterilization, compulsory motherhood and prohibition of

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<sup>61</sup>Lower, *Hitler’s Furies*, 22.

<sup>62</sup> Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 48.



motherhood - far from contradicting each other - had now become two sides of a coherent policy combining sexism and racism.”<sup>63</sup> Thus Jewish women, those with a disability, or even those considered to be “feeble-minded” were often excluded from becoming mothers, usually by force. This rhetoric, and indeed the practices of sterilization, were not part of the rhetoric in France, although the Nazis encouraged it. In Germany, then, Aryan women had more incentive to be active participants in racial crimes and to take on state roles. Although German women were eventually forced to take on lower-level state roles such as secretaries and camp overseers due to compulsory labor, they were more likely to volunteer earlier or take them seriously. Wendy Lower argues that in Nazi Germany, “the fact of shared race between husband and wife could trump the inequalities of gender.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, because race was so important, it was expected for women to partake in activities to promote the pure Aryan race even if these activities violated their femininity.

Mothers in both countries struggled to feed their children once rations were put into place, although rations in France were much worse than rations in Germany. While bread rations in the winter of 1942-1943 in France averaged about 275-350 grams per day, in Germany they were slightly higher at about 285-383 grams per day. At the same time meat rations averaged around 120-180 grams per week in France, in Germany they averaged 300-462 grams per week.<sup>65</sup> Germany was able to keep higher rations in part because they occupied

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<sup>63</sup> Bock, “Racism and Sexism,” 277.

<sup>64</sup> Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 62.

<sup>65</sup> Sarah Fishman, “The Messiness of Everyday Life under the Occupation” in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History, selected papers of the annual meeting* Vol. 30 (2002) 66-67;

so many territories and were able to reap foodstuffs and other resources from those nations. It was also extremely important to Hitler that women did not feel the hardships of war on the home front. As Belinda Davis argues, food crises in the Great War weighed heavily on Hitler's mind and he wanted desperately to "prevent a homefront experience like that of the First World War." As a result, it was imperative to rely on the "brutal looting of occupied lands and exploitation of slave labor" to provide the necessary food and attempt to keep women out of the labor force as long as possible, although of course female participation in the workforce was inevitable.<sup>66</sup>

As a result, women in France felt the hardships of war much sooner and more severely than in Germany. Hunger became a problem as early as the winter of 1940, especially as rationing became more intense, and feeding one's family rested solely on the mother as many men were in Germany as prisoners or as forced laborers. Women therefore could not adhere to the prescribed image of the *femme au foyer*, as they had to leave the home to secure ways to provide for their families. Historian Richard Vinen recounts how in December of 1940 Liliane Schroeder waited in line "for twenty minutes to buy some Brussel sprouts and then for another half an hour to buy a piece of black pudding."<sup>67</sup> Many would wait in line for hours only to find there was nothing left, which was particularly demoralizing in the bitterly cold winters during the first years of the

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*Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4- The German Home Front in World War II* Ed. Jeremy Noakes (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 513-514.

<sup>66</sup> Belinda J. Davis, "Homefront: Food, Politics and Women's Everyday Life during the First World War" in *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* Eds. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (New York: Berg, 2002), 131.

<sup>67</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 217.

occupation. As Caroline Moorehead notes, by the winter of 1941 “everything seemed to be rationed, even milk for children.”<sup>68</sup> With rationing in place, the food available to women was already minimal; according to Sarah Fishman, “by the winter of 1942-1943, official rations dropped below 1200 calories per day” with bread rations ranging from 275-350 grams per day and meat rations in January of 1942 reaching only 120-180 grams per week.<sup>69</sup> Just as rations became scarcer, around 1942-1944, men were also sent over to Germany more frequently as part of a forced labor system, meaning that on top of the difficulty in normally obtaining food was the added struggle of women supporting families on their own.<sup>70</sup>

The memoirs of many women complain about the difficulty of getting food; Claire Chevrillon recounted how most products had to be rationed as much of what France actually produced was shipped to Germany. Not only were many goods sent to Germany as part of the armistice or used to feed the Germans who remained in France, but agricultural production in France was disrupted when prisoners of war were taken in 1940. About 450,000 of the two million men imprisoned in Germany in 1940 were farmers, and for a time France feared a famine.<sup>71</sup> Although some were able to supplement rations with extra food (if they lived in the country and had their own farm or had family who had a farm) most women, especially those within cities, struggled to feed their families. Rations could not even be counted on; Chevrillon writes that “a ration ticket didn’t mean

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<sup>68</sup> Moorehead, *A Train in Winter*, 80.

<sup>69</sup> Sarah Fishman, “The Messiness of Everyday Life,” 66-67.

<sup>70</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 247.

<sup>71</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 220.

there was food to be bought. Often you'd spend a half-hour in line only to hear, 'Finished! There's nothing left!' And then the line would break up in silence."<sup>72</sup>

This posed many difficulties for women who had children to support and no way to support them. The inability of women to help their family survive was very trying, and put a strain upon mothers as a whole.

The Vichy regime strongly encouraged motherhood. Pétain made the family the foundation of rebuilding France. He wrote in 1940 that "the family is the essential unit; it is the foundation of the social structure; one must build upon it. If it gives way, all is lost; while it holds, everything is saved."<sup>73</sup> The government offered many incentives to help families thrive. Mothers of larger families were able to obtain extra rations and special treatment in food lines as well as medals and photos in the newspapers to boost morale and emphasize the appearance of happy and healthy families. Fathers of large families were given preference in the job market.<sup>74</sup> Thus, women had incentives to become mothers and to go along with Vichy. Yet at the same time many women could barely keep their children alive. In 1942, *Femmes de Provence*, a resistance paper, clearly illustrated this issue, criticizing the Mother's Day celebrations by remarking that "the criminal government of Pétain-Laval, responsible for our miseries, announce with their usual cynicism that on Mother's Day three hundred thousand special teas will be offered in the southern zone, when millions of

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<sup>72</sup> Claire Chevrillon, *Codename Christiane Clouet: A Woman in the French Resistance* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1995), 23.

<sup>73</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 46.

<sup>74</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 46.

children go hungry every day.”<sup>75</sup> Pointing this out was extremely dangerous, as it revealed that Vichy focused more on the appearance of the glorified mother than actually helping families. By focusing on the celebrations of mothers in this public light, the regime avoided addressing the more important issues that prevented women from actually being mothers. Communists also demonstrated how the government promoted an unrealistic and idealized public image of motherhood by “caricaturing the government’s *Fête des Mères* poster (of the joyous mother lifting up her child) with one of its own in which a mother holds up her starving child, crying out for help.”<sup>76</sup> By turning this iconic image on its head, Communists exposed Vichy’s reality. Instead of the successful mother, everything that encompassed motherhood and the revitalization of France was decomposing. When mothers could not even perform their most simple yet important role of caring for their children, women began to look towards other alternatives in order to survive, and thus it is no wonder that women began to turn to both resistance and collaboration efforts in order to maintain their families.

Vichy encouraged collaboration as a means of helping France, but it also enabled many women to keep their families alive, as it often meant more access to products and food. By working with Vichy one could attain rations more easily, and those who knew high-ranking members within the Vichy government were often able to live a comparatively luxurious lifestyle. Corinne Luchaire reaped the rewards of being the daughter of a high-ranking collaborationist within the Vichy regime, and although she did not always go along with the ideology of the

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<sup>75</sup> Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 134-135.

<sup>76</sup> Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 134-135.

regime, she gladly benefitted from her position.<sup>77</sup> It was also generally the case that the Germans had more access to necessary goods as well as luxury items, and it was not unheard of for women to look towards these men in order to find some kind of sustenance. One woman, for example, recalled “a German officer named Hubert who used to visit the dentist’s wife in a white convertible, bringing her all sorts of delicacies” that she would not have had access to otherwise.<sup>78</sup> These goods allowed her to live a much better quality of life simply as a result of her relationship. Those involved in resistance organization also noted the appealing lifestyle that the Germans had. During an assassination mission on a German officer, the *résistante* named Claude remembered the extravagance of the meal because of how rare it was to have enough to eat.<sup>79</sup> The appeal of the occupiers’ lifestyle made collaboration very appealing, as it was a way for women to sustain themselves and their children, thus fulfilling their most important duty as mothers.

The resistance movement quickly picked up on the problems that mothers faced, and tried to recruit these struggling women. By addressing the needs of women, those involved in the resistance were able to expose the treacheries of the regime. For example, Agnes Humbert recounted how one woman named Colette would “prowl the local markets, slipping leaflets into the shopping baskets of passing housewives. These tracts explain[ed] how the shortages of food and other goods are not caused - as the Germans would have us believe - by the

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<sup>77</sup> Corinne Luchoire, *Ma Drôle de Vie* (Deterna, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> Gildea. *Marianne in Chains*, 51.

<sup>79</sup> Schwartz, “Partisanes and Gender Politics in Vichy France,” 130.

British blockade, but are in fact the consequence of their own systematic plundering of our national reserves.”<sup>80</sup> By wandering the markets, women were able to resist in plain sight under the cover of being a woman. By playing upon the idea that the Germans and the Vichy regime itself were the source of the hardships mothers were facing, the resistance movement encouraged women to fight against the injustices they faced. This was particularly appealing because oftentimes working with organized resistance movements provided more access to food and goods, as the networks would work together to ensure that the members were taken care of whenever possible. It also opened up the black market, allowing women to gain more access to food or to ration cards. In many cases, as women were forced into difficult positions in which they could not uphold their roles as mothers, they turned to collaboration or resistance for help.

Women in Germany soon faced similar hardships. Rationing went into place as early as 1939 in Germany, but the rations were originally much more substantial than in France. While the French had rations below 1200 calories per day in the winter of 1942-1943, German rations attempted to provide the “normal consumer” with about 2,400 calories per day.<sup>81</sup> German rations did not face severe cuts until April of 1942, but they were somewhat restored that autumn.<sup>82</sup> Low food rations not only made survival difficult, but also lowered morale among the German population, something that the German administration continuously attempted to address. Ursula Mahlendorf’s memoirs recall how in school her

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<sup>80</sup> Humbert, *Resistance*, 38.

<sup>81</sup> *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4- The German Home Front in World War II* Ed. Jeremy Noakes (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 512.

<sup>82</sup> *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4*, 518.

teacher would tell them that “only degenerates eat the quantities of butter, cheese, meat, and sausages that [they] used to consume before rationing,” always finding a rationalization for the scarcity of food.<sup>83</sup> Whether or not her teacher actually believed this, especially in Germany it was part of the rhetoric of the state that Germans had enough food. One SD report for 1942 commented on the low morale of the people, noting that there were obvious class struggles as well. Not only did the report state that “new restrictions are felt particularly acutely by housewives who find it impossible to feed their families adequately” but also that “workers mention with great bitterness the fact that a large section of the so-called better-off circles can get hold of things in short supply in addition to their food rations through their social connections and bigger purses.”<sup>84</sup>

Connections to the party, as well as financial access to black market goods, produced different living experiences on the home front for different classes. Emmy Goering recalled when she brought her husband Hermann Goering a plate of food based on the ration allowances and told him “There’s the ration on which a German family must live for a week!” he was supposedly so upset that he tried to increase the ration amounts. She also noted that when their daughter, Edda, wore out her summer shoes, she would have had to go barefoot if she hadn’t been Hermann’s daughter due to the rationing system.<sup>85</sup> Since Hermann held such an important position within the party, the whole family was able to benefit from this, although Emmy makes it obvious that the rations of

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<sup>83</sup> Ursula Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival: Working through a Nazi Childhood* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 153.

<sup>84</sup> *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4*, 518.

<sup>85</sup> Emmy Goering, *My Life with Goering* (London: David Bruce & Watson, 1972), 110.



most Germans were abysmal and made survival nearly impossible. The benefits of collaboration with the regime were obvious, especially considering the possibly fatal alternative. Even though Emmy claimed to resist the regime and detest much of what the party was doing, she still benefitted from her husband's position.

Perhaps German women faced circumstances most similar to their French counterparts starting in 1945 when the Allies occupied Germany. In Essen, for example, daily calories dropped to an average of 663 in early 1945, and were still at less than 1,000 in early 1947.<sup>86</sup> While this was less than what most were getting in France, during this time period many German women had to rely on the Allied troops for survival, in a somewhat similar fashion to how some French women relied on Germans. The diary of an anonymous woman in Berlin recounts when the Russians came and began to rape many of the women in the city. After a horrifying experience, she decided that she “[had] to find a single wolf to keep away the pack” and from then on would find the highest ranking man she could to have a relationship with.<sup>87</sup> By doing so, not only was she able to keep multiple Russians away, but she also was able to get access to Russian food while many others starved. Just as many French women had relationships with Germans to procure food, many German women faced a similar dilemma with the Allies. This woman was even able to use a Polish officer to help her get in the front of the line at the water pump. She noted in her diary that “the people

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<sup>86</sup> *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4*, 520.

<sup>87</sup> Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City: A Diary* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 64

in line stare[d] at me with bitterness and contempt.”<sup>88</sup> Many Germans did not approve of these relationships with the Allies, yet it was often a way to survive. Although women such as the anonymous writer did collaborate with the Allies in this sense, they were simultaneously resisting the occupiers by using some men to keep away others and to get food.

### ***Image and Reality: Lack of Men, Motherhood, and Women in the Workforce***

Although the 1930s saw a push in both France and Germany to “return” women to the home, the outbreak of war quickly made this impossible for many women. Especially in the later years of war, a lack of men on the home front made it exceedingly difficult for women to be stay-at-home mothers, and war propaganda shifted towards encouraging female involvement in the work force. These shifts occurred at different times and in different ways in France and Germany. Women in France felt this shift much earlier, as men were being taken from France before the armistice in June of 1940. In Germany, forced foreign labor meant that women were not pressured to work until the later years of the war. But the jobs they filled were very different from those in France. Many German women went east, either by volunteering or by force, and were actively involved in often detrimental racial policies that French women did not even get to witness.

During the early 1940s, the Nazis took many French men to Germany, leading to a severe lack of men. As Claire Chevrillon notes in her memoirs, the French POW camps were essentially a zone which the armistice had created,

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<sup>88</sup> Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin*, 112.

encompassing “1.8 million men behind barbed wire.”<sup>89</sup> Her sister’s husband was captured as a prisoner of war, and she writes of the worry that her sister as well as the rest of her family had to deal with as a result. Having their husbands far away and in oftentimes terrible conditions caused much strife for women left alone in France. Helene Eck notes that “in 1940 the Germans took 1,600,000 men prisoner. More than half of the captives were husbands, one fourth were fathers.”<sup>90</sup> Richard Vinen notes that of these prisoners taken captive in 1940, “over a million did not return home until the summer of 1945.”<sup>91</sup> As the heads of households disappeared, women had no choice but to step up and take over, even though this contradicted the goal of the regime to place women back in the home. It became increasingly difficult to fulfill the role of the mother without having men around. Especially for young women who had not yet had children, their chance to fulfill their place within society as mothers was increasingly slim. As Robert Gildea argues, “life was hard for all women, not least for the wives of POWs. In the first place, how were women whose husbands were in camps supposed to have legitimate children?”<sup>92</sup> Some women did not even receive any news of their imprisoned husbands for over a year, which also led to demoralization.<sup>93</sup>

By 1942-1943, many men were being forced to participate in compulsory labor programs in Germany as part of the *Service du Travail Obligatoire*. In the

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<sup>89</sup> Chevrillon, *Codename Christiane Clouet*, 26.

<sup>90</sup> Helene Eck, “Les Françaises sous Vichy- Femmes du Désastre, Citoyennes par le Désastre ?” in *Histoire des Femmes en Occident* ed. Georges Duby, Michelle Perot, Françoise Thebaud (Paris : Plon, 2002) 195.

<sup>91</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 15.

<sup>92</sup> Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, 79.

<sup>93</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 15.

summer of 1942, the *relève* program traded in three French workers who “volunteered” for a released prisoner of war. In reality, many who went were coerced, and Vinen argues that during this time disillusionment with Vichy grew as it became obvious that the regime was having a negative effect on the population.<sup>94</sup> By September, a French law made it possible for “workers to be drafted into employment in the national interest.”<sup>95</sup> The French began to constitute much of labor force, which was particularly important to the Germans as they needed more of their own men to fight. Collaboration began to obviously pull apart at the family structure. Women could not stay at home when the breadwinner was away, and women could not fulfill their roles as mothers without the possibility of conceiving children. This made it very difficult to obtain the idealized family that the regime supported to build a stronger nation.

By this point, many French women found it increasingly difficult to survive with their husbands on the fronts or in Germany working. Elisabeth Sevier recounted in her memoirs that “obtaining food became a major problem” which was “something quite new” to her family, as her father was a physician and had previously provided them with a fairly comfortable income. However, once her father was drafted into the army, her mother “had no job skills to market” making it even more difficult financially for the family, and they “had considerably less money to buy food than before the war.”<sup>96</sup> Jobs that French women took on to support themselves and their families varied. Some made them prone to come

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<sup>94</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 249.

<sup>95</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 117.

<sup>96</sup> Sevier, *Resistance Fighter*, 14-15.

into contact with Germans on a fairly regular basis. As Vinen, notes, “waitresses, shop assistants and chambermaids were all likely to come across Germans in the course of their work (and were often regarded as legitimate sexual targets).”<sup>97</sup> Women who took positions such as typists and cleaning women also tended to have more contact with Germans, and being in these positions made them likely to be accused as collaborators after liberation. There were also French women who worked directly for the Germans, mostly cooking and cleaning for them as “a common means of earning money in areas where Germans were garrisoned.”<sup>98</sup>

By 1944, the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* which had originally only applied to men was expanded to include childless women from the ages of eighteen to forty-five. They were not required to go to Germany as the men were, however. Instead, they remained in France and made up much of the workforce there.<sup>99</sup> As a result, women went from being forced out of work to being drafted to work if they were not mothers. Therefore, women were able to navigate around France much more easily than men. They made up a majority of the population and were expected to be out and about. Men who were of the age to be drafted were often not supposed to still be in France, making it more difficult for men to maneuver a spectrum of resistance and collaboration on the home front.

In Germany, women faced similar struggles with many of their men fighting on the fronts. As Wendy Sarti argues, “the Nazis made great use of

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<sup>97</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 162.

<sup>98</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 163.

<sup>99</sup> Ian Ousby, *Occupation: The Ordeal of France, 1940-1944* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 251.

women before and during the war; whether these women worked as secretaries, radio operators, laborers in munitions factories, or other war-related activities, the Nazi regime allowed, and then required, that some women work to help provide service to the Fatherland, thus allowing men to concentrate on the warfront.”<sup>100</sup> As in France, some women had to start working fairly early on during the war in order to support their families as male heads of household went to the fronts. Yet, perhaps what is most different about the push towards women in the workforce in Germany is what positions German women were forced to take, and where these jobs led them.

By January of 1943, a decree “concerning the Registration of Men and Women for Reich Defence Tasks” went into place that made it necessary for women between seventeen and forty-five to “register for work.”<sup>101</sup> There were several exemptions to this, in particular pregnant women and mothers with younger children. The regime put considerable effort into making female participation in the workforce a positive one. One radio show entitled “What do we not expect of German Women” that was broadcast in February of 1943 stipulated that women were expected to do jobs that were previously male, but not lose their femininity in the process. It stated that “shop girls will become conductresses, conductors will become soldiers or armament workers. Milliners will get into uniform and shorthand typists will go into the electrical industries.”<sup>102</sup> Women were replacing men as they went to the front, and their contributions

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<sup>100</sup> Wendy Adele-Marie Sarti, *Women and the Nazis: Perpetrators of Genocide and Other Crimes during Hitler's Regime* (Palo Alto, CA: Academia Press, LLC, 2011), 5.

<sup>101</sup> *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4*, 330-331.

<sup>102</sup> *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4*, 331.

were necessary for a German victory. The broadcast even mentioned that “either we win this war all together, or we shall all go together to where Stalin would like us to go.”<sup>103</sup> The regime made women a necessary part of a national goal, but it still reminded them to stay feminine. The hairdressers were expected to continue working as “there is scarcely a woman with a permanent wave who would not lose her enjoyment of work and pleasure if she had to go around with her hair untidy and uncared for. We want our girls and women to remain pretty.”<sup>104</sup> Although Hitler was reluctant to make it necessary for women to work, with defeats in Russia it became necessary in 1943, and by 1944 the age of women required to work expanded to include those aged forty-five to fifty.<sup>105</sup>

Many women drawn into “total war” also went east to help with Nazi racial goals and expansion. Even young women who were part of groups such as the League of German Maidens were expected to spend some time in the east. Ursula Mahlendorf experienced this as part of this group. She recalled that “the girls of the BDM now acted as nurses’ aides, took over as streetcar conductors when the men and boys were called up, worked in ammunitions factories, helped ethnic German farmers settle in annexed Polish territories - some even assisted in the forcible eviction of Polish farmers - and finally dug trenches as well.”<sup>106</sup> Other women either volunteered or were drafted to go east for various positions. Women who went east went as secretaries, nurses, teachers, wives and girlfriends of SS members, and concentration camp guards. Women chose to go

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<sup>103</sup> *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4*, 331.

<sup>104</sup> *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4*, 331.

<sup>105</sup> *Nazism 1919-1945: Volume 4*, 335.

<sup>106</sup> Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*, 103.

work in the east for various reasons. Some were excited for the “wartime adventure” and “experience” that awaited them.<sup>107</sup> Others went for their own self-advancement. Sarti argues that women who worked in the concentration camps in particular had the opportunity to advance to higher positions (within the female hierarchy) and in some cases make more money. Others found work in the east a way to contribute to the Nazi goal without being “consigned to the domestic sphere.”<sup>108</sup> Many women were also conscripted into going east and would have been imprisoned had they not complied.<sup>109</sup> In this way, German women had much more direct involvement in collaboration with racial crimes and the state system than did women in France, giving them more ways to navigate the spectrum, especially the collaboration side.

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<sup>107</sup> Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 145.

<sup>108</sup> Sarti, *Women and the Nazis*, 3-5.

<sup>109</sup> Sarti, *Women and the Nazis*, 3.



## **Motivations**

Relationships, personal beliefs, and survival motivated individuals during the Second World War. Although this paper focuses on women, men often had similar motivations. Both men and women had families, individual loyalties, personal ideologies, goals, and struggles for survival. Yet women were expected to relate to these concepts differently than men. While men were supposed to protect their families and show loyalty by fighting, women were obligated to be mothers or contribute to more appropriately feminine war efforts; while men often had to fight for survival on the fronts women were confronted with the difficulty of surviving and maintaining their families at home. Women and men occupied different spaces - often geographically, as well as socially - that shaped their motivations and how they engaged with society.

### ***Personal Convictions***

Without personal convictions, it would be difficult to even imagine a spectrum of resistance and collaboration. Individual morals and ideals to some extent drove everyone facing the Vichy and Nazi regimes. As Claudia Koonz notes, the home was one of the most important places creating both collaborationist and resistance sentiment. While she focuses on the role of women in providing a place of love and escape for the men who had committed atrocities, she also points to how the home provided a safe haven for many opponents to express their ideas and foster a sense of morality.<sup>110</sup> These notions of right and wrong proved to be guiding factors for many individuals.

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<sup>110</sup> Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 420.

Hiltgunt Zassenhaus followed the beliefs instilled in her from her family when she chose to rebel against the Nazis. She was a young German woman who worked for a mail censoring program in 1942, and then later transferred to the prison system to oversee a particular group of Norwegian prisoners whose mail she had previously censored. She played an important role in the system of the Nazi regime, helping it flourish. Yet how she chose to approach her job demonstrates that collaboration did not necessarily indicate loyalty to the regime. In this instance, her collaborationist role allowed her to resist and ultimately free the prisoners she oversaw. When she first began to sift through the letters of these men, she was given a “Special Order” from the Gestapo that told her to get rid of any of the letters that asked for food or were in any way “objectionable” to her.<sup>111</sup> Slowly, she began to sneak letters out of the office that asked for help so that they could still reach their destination. After some time, she even would write “Send food” on some of the letters if they had not asked for help themselves.<sup>112</sup> This was obviously extremely risky, and only her own personal convictions can account for this defiance. As Hiltgunt recounts in her memoir, for her the Third Reich “meant a family who stood together in their opposition to Hitler.”<sup>113</sup> By translating these ideals into action, she was able to help prisoners whom she had never even met. Although later she would develop relationships with these men, her initial actions were driven by her own sense of morality.

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<sup>111</sup> Hiltgunt Zassenhaus, *Walls: Resisting the Third Reich- One Woman's Story* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 57.

<sup>112</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 59.

<sup>113</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 7.

Mathilde-Lily Carré also attests to personal convictions as a driving factor for her resistance activities. She chose to join a resistance group in Paris when she heard that people in London were looking for people to go into France and report back to them. She “realized that it was in this field that [she] must explore and find out what [she] could do”, despite not being directly involved in France.<sup>114</sup> This sense of resistance became an integral part of her own ideology, although she was arrested by a German named Bleicher who forced her to essentially become a double agent and help him catch her fellow resisters. In her memoirs she claims that her convictions of resistance did not go away, despite her outward appearance as a collaborator. While in captivity she made a plan to go to London to give the Allies a list of French resisters to contact.<sup>115</sup> She was able to get to London, although whether she remained loyal to Bleicher or the resistance at this point is unclear.

Emmy Goering, married to the Reichsmarshall Hermann, also demonstrated a sense of personal convictions in her role within the regime. Emmy was one of the women who was not forced to act on both sides, but chose to with her marriage to Hermann. Her collaboration and benefit from the regime through her marriage is obvious, but in her memoir she notes many qualms that she had with the ideology of the state. Although much of her resistance revolved around her relationships, her signing of the manifesto of the Evangelical Church was noted by her prosecutor to have “required an enormous amount of courage” under Hitler’s regime. Her reason for doing so was her “conviction and [she]

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<sup>114</sup> Mathilde-Lily Carré, *I was the Cat* (London: Horowitz, 1967), 68.

<sup>115</sup> Carré, *I was the Cat*, 116.

owed it to [herself] to affirm it.”<sup>116</sup> Throughout her memoir, she focuses on her concern about the actions of the Nazis, especially in relation to Jews. Yet beyond the few Jewish people she was able to save because of her relationship to them, she did not advertise those convictions. She admits at one point that she wished she had spoken out more, but that it would have been useless. However she does point out that “one never knows whether one has acted rightly or wrongly,” although the dismay that she refers to in her memoir perhaps points to her inner belief that she may not have acted as rightly as she could have.<sup>117</sup>

Many other women were motivated to act by their religious beliefs. Renée Bédarida claims to have joined a resistance group because she was Christian and she “knew that Nazism was anti-Christian and anti-human.”<sup>118</sup> This moral concept is very important, as she clearly recognized the immorality of the situation and tied it to something greater than just her French roots, to human rights. Freya von Moltke, along with her husband, was part of the Kreisau Circle, one of the organized resistance groups in Germany. Much of the group was driven by religious ideals - Moltke noted that “we all basically had a devout attitude” and her and her husband “did it because... [their] Christian faith demanded it.”<sup>119</sup> While in Poland, Melita Maschmann encountered a woman who told her that the way the Germans treated the Poles was wrong, as they should be treated like people. The woman also told Maschmann that “it was a mistake to suppress religious education in schools and in the Hitler Youth.” As

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<sup>116</sup> Goering, *My Life with Goering*, 167.

<sup>117</sup> Goering, *My Life with Goering*, 95.

<sup>118</sup> Goering, *My Life with Goering*, 183.

<sup>119</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 255.

Maschmann recalled, she attributed this attitude and warning of the horrendous nature of the Nazis to “her own Christian convictions.”<sup>120</sup> The moral emphasis of Christian beliefs often resulted in individuals taking a stand against Nazism as something fundamentally wrong and immoral.

***Relationships: Family, Romantic Interests, and Friendships***

Relationships, especially family ties, were a strong motivator for both men and women. Having connections to the right people could easily secure the life of one’s family, and many chose to collaborate with the Nazis and Vichy to protect their families. Wilhelmine Haferkamp recalled that one of the reasons her husband decided to join the Nazi Party was because it was immensely beneficial to their children. “When ‘child rich’ people were in the Party, the children had a great chance to advance. Stake claims and everything. Ja, what else could my husband do? They joined the Party, nicht? There was nothing else we could do.”<sup>121</sup> The combination of social pressure and a sense of duty to the state and to their children turned the Haferkamps into a Nazi family when the party came into power in 1933. Because of their ties to the party, they were able to collect money from the government in the early years - Haferkamp even noted that she “sometimes got more ‘child money’ than [her] husband earned.”<sup>122</sup> And once rationing was in place, they had plenty of ration cards to keep them alive.

Yet family was also a reason to resist the regime, as many felt it would be better to protect them this way than by going along with Vichy and/or the Nazis.

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<sup>120</sup> Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, 77.

<sup>121</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 19.

<sup>122</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 19.

Several women in France who joined resistance networks risked everything to ensure that their children would not live in a world in which they would be oppressed. Marie-Louise de Luc joined the movement in 1940, an early date. Otherwise known as “Madame X”, she remarked that “It was for our children that I joined the Resistance early on, as did my husband. I felt I had to fight to ensure their future in the world we believed in.”<sup>123</sup> The mother of a woman named Cecile wondered how Cecile could continue in her resistance work as she had a child, and Cecile replied: “It is because I have a child that I do it. This is not a world I wish her to grow up in.”<sup>124</sup> Just as women had to ensure the survival of their children, they had to fight for their futures. This was just as important, and often involved much sacrifice. While this is in some ways tied in to personal convictions as well, the need of these women to protect the future society for their children to prosper is linked directly to motherhood. Many women of the resistance had to endure parting with their children in order to keep them safe. Marie-Madeleine Fourcade had to send her children away to trusted friends to ensure their safety. Once it became clear that the Gestapo had been after her son at his previous school, she went so far as to send them to Switzerland. When her children were in Lyon, she noted that she felt that she “had no right to see them” and expressed her great despair when they left.<sup>125</sup> These women were willing to risk everything for their children, and faced the terrible sadness

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<sup>123</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 216.

<sup>124</sup> Moorehead, *A Train in Winter*, 29.

<sup>125</sup> Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, *Noah's Ark* (New York: E.P Dutton & Company, Inc., 1974), 232.

that accompanied the separation from them, perhaps one of the most extreme sacrifices a mother could make.

Family ties in particular proved to be an essential reason for Stella Goldschlag's significant life change. Stella was a young Jewish woman who had been living illegally in Berlin until 1943, when the Gestapo captured her and her family and forced her to capture other Jews living in the city. When she was originally being held in a different location from her parents, Stella's prison was bombed, but she chose to find her parents instead of running away. As she told Wyden in an interview, "My emotions and love for my parents caused me to decide to share their lot."<sup>126</sup> The only reason she agreed to work with the Gestapo was because by doing so she could keep herself and her parents off the list to Auschwitz. She even attempted to pretend to work with the Gestapo, but once caught, had no choice but to take on her position for real in order to keep her parents off the next train to Auschwitz.<sup>127</sup> However, even after her parents were eventually deported, Stella continued to work with the Gestapo, likely for her own survival.

Some women in France chose to establish relationships with the Germans in order to help their husbands who had been taken to Germany. Although this seems to contrast the goals of Vichy to make sure that women whose husbands were POWs did not commit adultery, one woman used her relationship to get her husband sent home. She conceived her third child after her husband had been taken prisoner, but then she was able to send him the birth certificate so that he

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<sup>126</sup> Peter Wyden, *Stella* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 150.

<sup>127</sup> Wyden, *Stella*, 151.

could request to return home as the “father” of a large family.<sup>128</sup> In this case, the woman was directly involved in collaboration, even committing the feared act of having sexual affairs with the enemy, but in return she clearly showed her protestation of her husband being taken away and was able to get him back. Another woman became friends with German railway workers while her fiancé was in Germany. Far from being upset about this friendship, her fiancé encouraged it. “She showed the German workers postcards that she had received from her lover, and she passed on to him the advice that the Germans gave her about how to survive in a German factory.”<sup>129</sup> Without her collaboration with the Germans, her fiancé would have not been able to get helpful tips that may have enabled his survival. However, many women were deemed to be collaborators for having similar relationships with German men. Without her husband to back up her claims of resisting and helping him, she may have been subject to the cruel punishment other women faced.

Relationships could also lead to participation, sometimes even if only through association. As Fabrice Virgili argues, “alongside the husband who belonged to the *milice*, who was an agent for the Gestapo or worked for the Germans, we find the image of a collaborationist couple joined as much in crime as in marriage.”<sup>130</sup> Women who had ties to Vichy or the Nazis could easily be considered collaborators, but this also worked in reverse - women who were connected to known resisters could also be thought to be an enemy of the

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<sup>128</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 299.

<sup>129</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 159.

<sup>130</sup> Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 30.



regime. In this case, some women were accused of collaboration because of who they happened to fall in love with. Nancy Wake recalled three women who were captured by her fellow Maquisards as “collaborators” and noted that one of them “had simply fallen in love with a man she shouldn’t have - a *Milicien*.”<sup>131</sup> Although falling in love usually involves some shared values and ideologies, simply being in love with a *Milicien* was enough to be condoned as a collaborator, even if the woman was not directly collaborating with Vichy. However, often relationships did not only lead to women resisting and collaborating through association, but they also got them directly involved.

Many women chose to stand by their husbands and lovers, whether these men were involved in resistance or collaboration activities. Gabrielle Ferrières, a Frenchwoman, recounts that “I did not really choose to join the Resistance. I simply joined my husband and brother in what they were doing.”<sup>132</sup> Emmi Bonheoffer, whose husband was involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler in 1944, commented that their opposition to the regime “gradually developed on its own in the family circle” essentially becoming something that family did together.<sup>133</sup> A young woman in France became the mistress of a German soldier and then went on to join a collaboration group so that she could stay close to him. She noted that “love has no barriers” and “after having subsequently been the mistress of two German officers, she fell into the arms of the General Commissioner of the PPF and on this occasion, so that nothing could be

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<sup>131</sup> Peter Fitzsimons, *Nancy Wake: A Biography of our Greatest War Heroine* (Australia: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002), 320

<sup>132</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 95.

<sup>133</sup> Dorothee von Meding, *Courageous Hearts*, 15.

between her and the one she loved, she joined the Party.”<sup>134</sup> A young German woman who the Gestapo employed to get secrets out of party members by establishing relationships with them turned in one man who was guilty of being an enemy of the party, but her next mission proved to be problematic for her when she fell in love with the man she was supposed to be exposing. She accepted his proposal of marriage with fatal consequences for them both - the Gestapo did not appreciate her choice to “betray [her] Party and the Fuehrer.” Although she told them she did not want anything to do with the Gestapo anymore, her resistance led to the death of her lover and her own suicide.<sup>135</sup> Her relationship caused her to change her course and actions dramatically, changing her collaboration with the Nazis into outright opposition.

While family and romantic relationships tended to be most present in memoirs, friendships were also extremely valuable. Emmy Goering’s relationships were the cause of both her collaboration and resistance. The connection she had with her husband allowed her to benefit and collaborate with the regime, but it also offered her the ability and protection to resist. With her husband’s help, she was able to aid several Jewish individuals she had befriended before her marriage escape Nazi Germany, noting that “a number of courts did intervene in [her] favour in the denazification court.”<sup>136</sup> It became such a problem that Hitler himself reprimanded her actions.<sup>137</sup> Her position and

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<sup>134</sup> Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 29.

<sup>135</sup> Richard Baxter, *Women of the Gestapo* (London: Quality Press, LTD, 1943), 38-41.

<sup>136</sup> Goering, *My Life with Goering*, 30.

<sup>137</sup> Goering, *My Life with Goering*, 34.

relations with collaborators in this instance allowed her to resist, yet she only did so for personal acquaintances.

Hiltgunt, who originally resisted on moral grounds, continued to do so also because of the relationships that she developed with the prisoners she oversaw. Even before she met them, she began to think of these individuals secretly as her “friends,” and after meeting them was able to develop a sense of trust with them.<sup>138</sup> She eventually began to bring these men medicine and food from her own rations, at a great risk to herself.<sup>139</sup> Hiltgunt became immensely devoted to her prisoners, even falling in love with one of them, although no romantic relationship ever developed. When they were sent to various different camps, she managed to track them all down and continue to ensure their welfare. There were several instances in which she almost stopped her work, as she was overwhelmed with all of it on top of her studies, but the bonds between her and the prisoners made it impossible for her to stop in good conscience.

Stella’s friendships encouraged her to save lives in several cases as she made efforts to exempt those she knew from the horrors of her roundups. Supposedly, “on one weekend she led her Gestapo people to cabins housing sixty-two Jews.”<sup>140</sup> Although such numbers make it difficult to conceive of Stella as anything beyond a collaborator, those who knew Stella often ended up in her protection. Isaak Behar, who knew Stella in school, recalled that Stella had spotted him during a roundup of Jews. He was not wearing his star and went up

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<sup>138</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 57.

<sup>139</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 127.

<sup>140</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 156.

to her and said, “Well, Stella.... Should I come along with you?’ Stella did a fast double take. ‘Not you!’ she exclaimed. ‘Get out of here!’”<sup>141</sup> In spring of 1943, Robert Zeiler, who had also known Stella since they were children, saw Stella while she was in the middle of a roundup forcing the Jews into the Gestapo truck. He noticed that Stella had spotted him and was curious if she would let him get away. “She did, though not without aiming an emphatic head motion in his direction. Her meaning was unmistakable: Get the hell out of here.”<sup>142</sup> Not turning in a Jewish person could get her in big trouble especially since catching illegal Jews secured her protection. She also took a particular interest in a prisoner named Heino Meissl. For Meissl, Stella “smuggled out letters to his mother in Munich and fetched clothing from his quarters.”<sup>143</sup> Through her influence with Dobberke, who was in charge of the lists, she was able to keep Meissl out of the camps as well, and snuck Meissl extra food and cigarettes. Without her help, Meissl would not have had extra food that probably helped him survive. Thus, even in the midst of a lifestyle of collaboration, she still risked resistance.

### ***Survival***

During the war, survival often became a daily struggle for many women as they had to keep themselves and their families alive in times of rationing and low supplies. As has already been discussed, women were responsible for feeding their families with increasingly measly and unreliable ration cards, and often had

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<sup>141</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 288.

<sup>142</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 247.

<sup>143</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 207.

to resort to acts of resistance and/or collaboration in order to procure food. Beyond supplying themselves and their families, women also had to navigate the spectrum of resistance and collaboration to avoid being killed or imprisoned. Informers were everywhere, making it unsafe to openly oppose the regime. As a result, collaboration was often the easier and definitely the safer option. When Hiltgunt Zassenhaus found out that there was an informer in her household, she noted that her “home would never be the same again” - they would constantly have to guard themselves.<sup>144</sup> As historian Vandana Joshi argues, the politics of the state penetrated the home, making denunciations just as possible in private as in public. Joshi argues that women gained agency by bringing the private sphere into the public sphere through denunciations. Often these women appealed to the roles which they were supposed to have within society, for example “as a responsible mother, a well-meaning and dutiful wife” who “emphasized her ‘feminine virtues’ like endurance, perseverance, and patience in trying to maintain peace at home” until she had no other outlet but the Gestapo.<sup>145</sup> Both men and women participated in denunciations, meaning that it was impossible to feel safe even from one’s own neighbors - and sometimes one’s own family. Even the smallest acts could end in arrest, making the sense of unease even more palpable. The Gestapo loomed as a feared presence.

This was true in France, as well. There was a lot of pressure to abide by Vichy’s policies, and the regime took several measures to ensure that the French

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<sup>144</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 206.

<sup>145</sup> Vandana Joshi, *Gender and Power in the Third Reich: Female Denouncers and the Gestapo (1933-1945)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 50.

population was compliant. Vichy officials consistently tried to find those with certain political positions, especially opponents of the regime. “Experts” were hired to provide officials with information on political opinion, and letters and phone calls were intercepted.<sup>146</sup> Almost anything could be considered opposition to the regime, which led to widespread paranoia. In 1941, for example, Liliane Schroder’s mother powdered her nose in a cinema while watching a newsreel, and was then threatened with arrest.<sup>147</sup> Sometimes neighbors even threatened to denounce each other if they showed anti-Vichy or anti-German opinion. For example, one woman who was criticized by some of her neighbors for her relationships with Germans threatened to denounce them for their insults.<sup>148</sup> This sense of power changed dramatically after the liberation, when the same individuals who were at risk of being denounced for their anti-German sentiment were then able to accuse that woman of collaboration. The *milice*, run by the French and later assisted by the Germans, was particularly brutal with opponents of Vichy and the Nazis. They became a formidable force in the years leading up to the liberation and helped to eradicate large groups of resistance members. The *milice* created courts to try resistance workers and had them killed by firing squads.<sup>149</sup> The fear that accompanied the *milice* and the Vichy regime led many to collaborate to avoid detrimental results. There were also many instances in which women, such as Mathilde Lily-Carré, were coerced into collaboration under

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<sup>146</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 86.

<sup>147</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 92.

<sup>148</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 178.

<sup>149</sup> Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 329.

threat of death. She was part of a resistance network in France, but the Germans captured her and forced her to denounce other members in her group.

***Conclusion: Motivations across the Spectrum***

Regardless of where women moved on the spectrum, they shared guiding interests. Following personal convictions, protecting loved ones, individual relationships, and attempting to survive in spite of dismal conditions drove women to act across the spectrum. The harsh dichotomies constructed by society about women that have placed women into two distinctly different categories of good and bad, sacrificial and selfish, resister and collaborator, tend to overlook the similarities behind their motivations.

These types of motivations not only had the power to draw individuals further away from the center of the spectrum, but they also had the ability to be in themselves contradictory. For example, when Elisabeth Sevier's Jewish neighbors got taken away by the Gestapo, Sevier found their little girl hidden in a cabinet in their vacant apartment. She brought the baby back to her own home, where her mother told her "we cannot keep her, because we cannot feed her."<sup>150</sup> Elisabeth convinced her mother to allow the little girl to stay with them until they could find a safe place for her, but her mother did not want to let the child stay with them for too long because of the responsibilities that accompanied the child. The ways in which both Elisabeth and her mother responded to this situation demonstrate how people could have similar motivations while simultaneously moving around the spectrum. Elisabeth's desire to help save the little girl was

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<sup>150</sup> Sevier, *Resistance Fighter*, 25.

spurred not only by her own personal relationship to the family, but also by her wish to do something that went directly against the Nazi regime. Her mother was concerned about the girl because she was close with the girl's parents. She chose to act in opposition to the regime by harboring a Jewish child, which was considered a major crime and could cost her and her family their lives. At the same time, her act of resistance was not permanent. Elisabeth's mother eventually did choose to send the little girl to a safer location, both for the sake of the child and Elisabeth's family. Her mother's eventual shift to collaboration was based on her desire to keep her family safe. Perhaps that is not a discontinuation of her resistance, but rather an act that put her closer to the middle than the edges of the spectrum. After all, she did not do anything to turn the little girl in and cause her harm of any kind, but chose to keep her safe regardless. Both of her decisions were ultimately founded on personal relationships.

To imagine that the motivations that drove women to act on different ends of the spectrum were exceedingly disparate is to concede to the idea that resistance and collaboration were black and white, and that women could not do both simply because of their labels. More often than not, it was a matter of personal convictions, survival, and keeping loved ones safe that led to both extremely heroic and exceedingly horrifying acts of resistance and collaboration, and all the various deeds in between. This is, of course, not to imply that having good motivations necessarily eradicated the consequences of destructive practices. Rather, it demonstrates that women throughout the spectrum were



guided by similarly important ideas and relationships, sometimes even the need to save a life.

### **Playing the Part - Navigating the Spectrum**

In her work on female members of resistance organizations in France, Weitz argues that women knowingly “assumed a role” and acted out the part they were expected to play.<sup>151</sup> Although her monograph only examines women in France, this concept can easily be applied to women in Germany as well, and to women acting along the spectrum of collaboration and resistance. Women were able to play upon their gender, evoking the appearance of an ideal housewife, an apolitical woman, or even a sexualized woman, to maneuver within their societies and avoid suspicion. However, women were not only able to utilize their gender, but also their race and their jobs. The value the Nazis gave to race meant the appearance of being Aryan, which was fairly subjective and blurry, gave women a valuable pass with which to navigate society. Jobs also could be manipulated, especially for those women who took on state jobs, as these offered a cover for resistance or more direct forms of collaboration. While women often knowingly used these roles and expectations to their advantage, it ultimately came down to the perception of others as to how their actions were judged, rewarded, or punished. The connections that women had to those involved in resistance or collaboration had the potential to determine their fate at the end of the war.

#### ***Taking a Role - Utilizing Gender***

The Nazis and the Vichy regime in France held very similar idealized images and expectations for women. As Weitz notes, in Vichy “French women were told that to attract the male of the species - to ensure reproduction - women

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<sup>151</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 246.

needed to be both morally and physically attractive.”<sup>152</sup> At the same time, however, French women were repeatedly chastised for “their vanity and material concerns” meaning that women had to be attractive without obviously focusing their attention on their looks.<sup>153</sup> Nazis held similar expectations for their women. As Lower notes, “the ideology of the *Volk* has its own female aesthetic. Beauty - according to this ideology - was a product of a healthy diet and athleticism, not of cosmetics. German girls and women were not supposed to paint their fingernails, pluck their eyebrows, wear lipstick, dye their hair, or be too thin.”<sup>154</sup> The ideal German woman had solely reproductive value, and it was feared wearing makeup could lead to prostitution and “racial degeneration.”<sup>155</sup>

As a result, one of the best ways for both French and German women to navigate the spectrum was to play upon the idealized image of the housewife and mother. When Marthe Cohn was planning to cross into Germany, for example, she took extreme care to exemplify an ideal German woman. She recalled that the Gestapo “preferred their womenfolk to be neatly and tidily dressed rather than smart, with very little, if any, makeup” and dressed accordingly in a simple “grey-blue dress,” stockings, and her hair in a bun.<sup>156</sup> Women were generally assumed to be fairly apolitical and less intelligent than their male counterparts. Even though German women were supposed to participate in state organizations, they were distinctly female and centered on the

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<sup>152</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 47.

<sup>153</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 47.

<sup>154</sup> Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 25.

<sup>155</sup> Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 25.

<sup>156</sup> Marthe Cohn, *Behind Enemy Lines: The True Story of a French Jewish Spy in Nazi Germany* (New York: Harmony Books, 2002), 226.

domestic sphere more than the political sphere. As Jill Stephenson argues, “valuable women’... were expected to demonstrate their politicization by participating in the Nazi women’s organizations and in other institutions of the Nazi state.... This, rather than participation in a pluralist political system, was the definition of ‘active citizens.’”<sup>157</sup> Even with this access to political organizations, women were not meant to be political beyond their support for the Nazis which permeated their lives.

However, even though the idealized image of the woman was the mother and housewife, devoid of makeup and thrifty, there was still an appeal for the more sexualized woman in both societies. Eva Braun was known for being nothing like “the kind of ideal German girl you saw on recruiting posters for the BDM or in women’s magazines. Her carefully done hair was bleached, and her pretty face was made up - quite heavily but in very good taste.”<sup>158</sup> Yet it is interesting that Cohn chose to represent the idealized housewife to get into Germany, while many French women in France chose to play upon more sexualized images to bypass the Gestapo. Perhaps in part this comes back to different expectations that Germans had for French women as opposed to German women, although this is not to say that German women never utilized sexuality. Women realized that they could use these images - of the mother and wife, the apolitical, unintelligent woman, and the sexualized woman - to more effectively navigate the spectrum.

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<sup>157</sup> Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (New York: Longman, 2001), 20.

<sup>158</sup> Junge, *Until the Final Hour*, 63.

### *The Mother and Wife*

In both France and Germany, women were expected to be mothers and wives to foster the growth of the nation. The ideal of the *Hausfrau* in Germany and the *femme au foyer* in France helped allowed women to manipulate societal notions of motherhood to their advantage. In France, women involved in resistance networks often utilized a maternal image to clandestinely transport important items. Historian Paula Schwartz notes that many women would place weapons “in ‘pregnant’ pouches on their person, in baby carriages, and even in baby diapers to support safe transport.”<sup>159</sup> Societies that so valued motherhood were unlikely to suspect a woman to be carrying dangerous items near her baby. But the image of the mother was not only helpful in organized resistance, nor was it only helpful in France.

Wilhemine Haferkamp, who had ten children with her husband who was a Nazi party member, played upon the concept of motherhood to help feed those who were forced to work in a construction site near their house. She saw the miserable conditions of the men “with icicles in their beards” and found ways to sneak food to them, a crime known as “‘füttern den Feind’ (feeding the enemy).”<sup>160</sup> Because the couple had so many children and was in good standing with the Party, the family had more than enough food for themselves once rationing was implemented.<sup>161</sup> Although she clearly benefitted from her husband’s position in the party, she was also able to resist the regime. In her

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<sup>159</sup> Paula Schwartz, “Partisanes and Gender Politics in Vichy France,” 132.

<sup>160</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 20.

<sup>161</sup> Owings, *Frauen* 19.

interview with Alison Owings, she recalls one day when she made an extra-large pot of milk soup for her children, making sure she would have leftovers. She went and asked the watchman if she could possibly allow the workers to have what was left, since otherwise she would have to throw it out. She told him “it hurts me in the soul, I can’t sleep the whole night if I have to pour out the soup and the men freeze there.”<sup>162</sup> By emphasizing her maternal instincts, even pointing out that it would have physical consequences for her to ignore them, Haferkamp was able to convince the watchman to allow her to feed to workers, and she was able to use this excuse to her advantage several times. Her actions did eventually cause problems in the Party, however. One day someone in the Party called in her husband and told him, “Listen, your wife is sure doing fine things. How can she fodder our enemies?”<sup>163</sup> He came home and yelled at her, reminding her that she could get both of them in a lot of trouble. The Party considered her having so many children as extremely beneficial as she was following her societal racial duties - in their words “doing fine things,” - which made it so confusing for her also to sabotage Germany by feeding “enemies.” Even after this incident, Haferkamp continued to sneak food to the workers. When her husband went downstairs he noticed someone waiting for his wife to bring bread, and he told the guard that “there’s nothing to be done with this woman.”<sup>164</sup> Haferkamp’s gender, and the expectations society associated with it,

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<sup>162</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 20.

<sup>163</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 21.

<sup>164</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 21.

allowed her to gain the pity of the guard by emphasizing her maternalism while simultaneously giving her husband a justifiable excuse for her actions.

Lucie Aubrac, who worked with a resistance organization in Lyon, was pregnant during much of her resistance activities. After the arrest of her husband Raymond, Aubrac knew that she had to do something to free him and appealed to the more sexualized image of women to try to set him free. On June 23, 1943, she visited the head of the German police services in Lyon, Obersturmführer Klaus Barbie, to get her husband back after his arrest. She attests to putting “on a very pretty checkered rayon suit, big white porcelain daisy earrings, and a tiny pillbox hat with a little veil” to put her femininity on display. She used her pregnancy to get her husband back, claiming that instead of being married he was actually a lover who had gotten her pregnant and she needed him to marry her to legitimize the pregnancy.<sup>165</sup> Recognizing the call that France was making to mothers and the ideal family, Aubrac realized that her best chance was to approach the officials by playing upon this idea. Although she was unable to get her husband released through this ruse, she was able to talk to the head of the German police in Lyon without him even suspecting an ulterior motive. Her best possible disguise was that of a future mother, needing the male protection and support that a husband could give her. She even returned later on requesting an official marriage with Raymond before his execution so that she could pass on imperative information for Raymond regarding their plans to free him. Aubrac played up to the expectations for women in the regime even more so when she

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<sup>165</sup> Lucie Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 79.

begged the Obersturmführer for him to allow this marriage to occur, telling him that “I’m expecting a child. For my family’s sake and for society’s, I absolutely cannot be an unwed mother. And this child is entitled to have a father.”<sup>166</sup> If Aubrac had not gone to see Barbie about this circumstance, pleading to his conceptions of motherhood and family, then it is likely that her husband would not have been able to escape. She even plays slightly upon the image of the dumb girl, who was tricked by some man and now desperately needed to fix the situation. This is a clear example of a job that a woman had to do; by acknowledging her importance as a mother she gained access to a member of the Gestapo.

Women also played upon the idealized image of the wife to navigate the spectrum. Edith Beer was an Austrian Jewish woman who was able to go underground and escape to Munich with the help of an Aryan friend. Once in Munich, she met Warner Vetter, who just so happened to be in the Nazi Party - and fell in love with her. The two got engaged, and Vetter knew about her Jewish identity and promised to keep her safe. For Beer, being Vetter’s wife was the ultimate disguise. In her memoirs, she writes that “I thought that if I went with Werner, I would be better hidden: a little *Hausfrau* in a kitchen living with a member of the Nazi Party who worked for the company that made the planes which were dropping bombs on London. A man with clearances. A trusted man... Of course to be this man’s wife was a better disguise than being

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<sup>166</sup>Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 125.



single.”<sup>167</sup> By getting married to Warner, she was able to benefit immensely from his party association - it most likely ensured her life. An identity as a *Hausfrau* made it possible for her to conform and collaborate with the Germans - she had to if she was going to keep her true self secret. Yet at the same time, her very existence was dependent on this deception. Her collaboration was resistance, all taking place under the guise of a Nazi wife.

### *The Apolitical, Unintelligent Woman*

The idealized image of women in both countries during the war meant that many women were assumed to be fairly apolitical. Although German women were expected to partake in state groups, these groups were centered on ideal feminine constructs instead of political discussion. Women in both France and Germany were able to play upon the idea of the less intelligent, apolitical woman to navigate the spectrum. Some women used the image of the unintelligent woman to avoid suspicion from their opponents or sometimes even procure assistance. Hélène Renal described how she escaped arrest once in 1943 or 1944 by filling a bag with a double bottom with vegetables and then “went about like a dumb girl carrying a bag filled with carrots, turnips, and leeks.”<sup>168</sup> Not only did the food provide a way for Renal to escape suspicion as hunger was widespread and it was generally the woman’s job to come up with the meals, but she even notes how she looked like a “dumb girl” to anyone else. Thus, women played upon multiple images of women at once to reach their desired ends - the

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<sup>167</sup> Edith Beer, *The Nazi Officer’s Wife: How One Jewish Woman Survived the Holocaust* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2000), 182.

<sup>168</sup> Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 203.

image of the nourishing female, the unintelligent girl, and the ignorant woman who had no knowledge of possible resistance movements.

Edith Beer had to completely change her personality to erase her educated background. In Austria, she had studied law. In her disguise as a *Hausfrau*, however, she realized this training would only put her in danger. She wrote in her memoirs “I forced myself to forget everything dear to me, all my experience of life, my education; to become a bland, prosaic, polite person who never said or did anything to arouse suspicion.”<sup>169</sup> By appearing to be less educated, her disguise was more plausible. One young French girl, who helped the Noah’s Ark resistance group, supposedly repaired the lifebelts at a submarine base, while pricking holes in them and listening to gather information about the German U-Boats.<sup>170</sup> The Germans likely attributed this flaw to her failure at sewing, considering her to be a silly girl instead of plotting opposition. In this case, she not only appeared unintelligent, but also somewhat incapable of simple feminine jobs -neither of which raised a red flag to the Germans.

Women also tended to describe their involvement during the war years as very unpolitical, even though this was not always the case. By adhering to societal expectations, women had a way to evade responsibility. Anne Hepp, for instance, repeatedly told Alison Owings in her interview “I’m unpolitical” but referred to Hitler as “Führer” during the interview - “the phrase of a follower.”<sup>171</sup> Corinne Luchaire, a French woman and the daughter of the editor of a pro-Vichy

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<sup>169</sup> Beer, *The Nazi Officer's Wife*, 187.

<sup>170</sup> Fourcade, *Noah's Ark*, 194.

<sup>171</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 362.

newspaper who was later charged as a collaborationist and sentenced to death, exemplifies how women used the notion of being apolitical to try to escape judgment for what happened during war. She consistently affirmed that she had no idea how grave the situation was because she never read or kept up with the news. Thus she claimed she was not really collaborating as she did not realize that her affairs with Germans would be considered problematic. During the Occupation, of course, this was not a problem, but encouraged. Whether this was true or not, she played on this after the war when writing her story so that she would be seen as another ignorant woman, and thus not really guilty of collaboration. She wrote that “I was never interested in politics. I know I did not read the newspapers well. And all of the sudden, I found myself mixed up in events beyond my control, because one day I dined with this or that political figure, that I was received in this or that house.”<sup>172</sup> Everyone found themselves in various impossible situations that were beyond their control, as Luchaire points out. But since many of her situations involved communication or relationships with prominent figures in the collaborating governments, she could simply point to her female nature to steer others away from thinking she had a political agenda. In this way, her collaboration flowed from her female role; by not being interested in politics and not really paying attention to the news, she was merely following her roles and collaborating accordingly. Yet, at the same time, this must be questioned, as she does show small signs of being more aware of her situation, although perhaps only in hindsight. She recounted that while attending

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<sup>172</sup> Luchaire, *Ma Drôle de Vie*, 91.

a German event she refused to stand during the national anthem, noting that “I understood that my situation was delicate. It was impossible for me, as a Frenchwoman, my country at war with Germany, to stand for the German national anthem. I made my decision. The only one in the crowd of over a thousand people, I stayed seated.”<sup>173</sup> In this moment, she showed that she had some knowledge of how it would look to support the Germans, yet at the same time this did not later stop her from being around them, and she continued to fall back on not caring about politics and thus not having any political influence.

### *The Sexualized Woman*

Although the idealized woman was supposed to be natural, thrifty, and devoid of makeup, the image of the sexy woman still persisted. Women were able to play upon their sexuality to get past checkpoints and sometimes to survive. Oftentimes, women used this tool for resistance, thus making it appear to others that they were collaborating. An article published in 1942 in France warned women that “you too, you unworthy creatures who flirt with the Germans will have your heads shaved and you will be whipped, and on all your foreheads the swastikas will be branded with a red hot iron.”<sup>174</sup> This was paired alongside punishments for women who had slept with Germans; it demonstrates how even flirtation was considered a form of collaboration in France. Yet many women used flirtation to resist. Those who did not know of their intentions likely perceived these women to be collaborators. One French woman, named Danielle, remarked that “flirting a little with the Germans could yield excellent

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<sup>173</sup>Lucaire, *Ma Drôle de Vie*, 95.

<sup>174</sup>Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 67.

results,” and another named Claude even went on a date with a German officer, “leading her suitor to believe their evening was to have a grandiose finish” before she continued to “meet his eager advances” by killing him with a revolver.<sup>175</sup> In these cases, flirting with the Germans, and even dating them, became a way to resist the regime. This act by itself would of course be considered collaboration. However, since these women used men to aid them with their resistance activities, even in the case of Claude allowing her to assassinate the officer, it justified their actions. Yet one must wonder how others saw these women if they were unaware of their intentions. Claude, who was wearing “her only dress set off to its best occasion by the addition of a glamorous ostrich feather hat” eating in a restaurant with a German officer during a time when food was scarce for the French may have embodied the image of the female collaborator to a scornful eye.<sup>176</sup> Madeleine Passot was “slender, fearless, elegant with her red nails and tailored suits” in that way a perfect candidate for clandestine work, and she was known for sitting by Germans on the trains as she travelled with documents “rightly confident that they would gallantly protect her at checkpoints” again embodying what some imagined collaboration to be.<sup>177</sup> While women were considered in need of protection, it rarely dawned upon regime officials that they needed protection from these women. Women utilized societal assumptions about beauty and femininity to escape problematic scenarios.

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<sup>175</sup> Schwartz, “Partisanes and Gender Politics in Vichy France,” 130.

<sup>176</sup> Schwartz, “Partisanes and Gender Politics in Vichy France,” 130.

<sup>177</sup> Moorehead, *A Train in Winter*, 30.

Nancy Wake, an Australian woman who had married a French man and was living in Paris, helped to drive ambulances and later became “a significant operator for both the French and British anti-Nazi movements in France.”<sup>178</sup> There were several instances in which she had to play the role of the lover of a French or even German man in order to avoid suspicion while in the city. She remembered that “I played the part of the giddy Frenchwoman who didn’t give a bugger what happened in the war.... I was a *good-time girl*, I used to give Germans a date sometimes, sometimes three or four if I was away on a long trip and give them a little bit of hope. I played the part - I should have been an actress.”<sup>179</sup> Her ties to the Germans and French collaborators enabled her to move around more freely, as did her attempts to act like a French woman who had no interest in politics. Her husband’s job allowed her to live fairly comfortably during the war, so her interactions with the occupiers were not necessary for subsistence, but for appearing to be innocent. Another time, when Wake had to bicycle for days to attain a radio for the resistance group she was working with, she went out of her way the day before she left to put together “the most attractive outfit she could get” and “used judiciously some of the very last cosmetics” that she had in order to play her part.<sup>180</sup> Wake was fully aware of the benefits that playing the part of the French woman had for her projects, and she exploited it in various manners to assist her in her endeavors.

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<sup>178</sup> Fitzsimons, *Nancy Wake*, 140.

<sup>179</sup> Fitzsimons, *Nancy Wake*, 141.

<sup>180</sup> Fitzsimons, *Nancy Wake*, 298.

Women were not the only ones who realized their potential for playing upon gender preconceptions; governments and organizations also realized the value of the female “disguise.” In her memoirs, Corinne Luchaire wrote of how others would comment on her beauty, and as a result worry she might be a spy. At one point, she was discussing the rude behavior she encountered from a German who thought she was a spy when her friend, Otto Abetz, overheard her and remarked, “that’s funny! But see, it is very natural that we would mistake you for a spy. During war, we always take the pretty women to be spies. It is an honor that the horrible Burgmaster noticed your beauty. You should be flattered.”<sup>181</sup> The idea of using beautiful women as spies is interesting, as it implies that beautiful women were at once more threatening and yet less likely to be suspected. The fear of Luchaire being a spy because of her beauty indicates the power that beautiful women were supposed to have over men. In turn, this meant that sexualized women were more likely to get important information by playing on this image. At the same time, it also meant that being a beautiful woman posed a threat.

The Nazis employed several women in the Gestapo as agents to lure unsuspecting men into revealing their secrets. Richard Baxter’s *Women of the Gestapo*, published in London in 1943, discusses in depth the role that women played in the Gestapo system. He notes that the women chosen for the job were “not prostitutes in the ordinary sense of the word” but “consider[ed] themselves to be far above the level of such women. [They were] quite prepared to become the

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<sup>181</sup> Luchaire, *Ma Drôle de Vie*, 108.

mistresses of men holding high party office or officers in the German Services. Their one and only job is to discover the secrets of their men friends and then to betray them to the Gestapo proper.”<sup>182</sup> One woman, named Anita, had an affair with an officer in Berlin, and after finding incriminating documents, was able to turn him into the Gestapo. For her help, “Anita received warm praise and a reward of money.”<sup>183</sup> This was a way in which women could empower themselves while simultaneously helping out the state. By using her sex appeal and playing on the assumption that women had no interest in politics, Anita, as well as others, were able to expose enemies of the state.

Although Baxter’s work may have been more of a propaganda piece than actuality - his claim of the existence of a strictly female branch of the Gestapo is difficult to verify - the stories he tells may reflect actual occurrences. There were many women who worked for the Gestapo, some of their own choice and others out of coercion. The Gestapo immediately saw Stella Goldschlag’s value, for example, recognizing her potential for “exploiting her looks and sex. She was unique, a star discovered and waiting to be put to work! Where would they find another blonde, blue-eyed Jewess who would wiggle her way into any male confidence, who knew the habits, contacts, hiding places, and psychology of the U-boats, who could spot these tenacious resisters on the streets?”<sup>184</sup> Both her sex appeal and her Aryan looks, as well as her access to the Jewish underground, proved to be extremely useful to the Gestapo. It is interesting that

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<sup>182</sup> Baxter, *Women of the Gestapo*, 34-35.

<sup>183</sup> Baxter, *Women of the Gestapo*, 38.

<sup>184</sup> Wyden, *Stella*, 152.



both the state and individual women realized that women could play upon societal expectations to navigate the spectrum of resistance and collaboration. Even though this concept was acknowledged and put into use by state agencies, women used it to their advantage.

Mathilde Lily Carré, like Stella, was captured and forced to collaborate with her captors or face death, except Carré was arrested for resistance activities in France. After Bleicher arrested her, he forced Carré to allow him to accompany her to her meetings with her peers, where he immediately arrested her comrades. When he accompanied her to her first meeting, he told her companion Duvernois that he was under arrest and Duvernois “turned green... and turned to [Mathilde] ‘What a slut you are!’”<sup>185</sup> In this instance, Carré was probably most helpful because of her gender. While it was not unusual to see a woman with a man, if Duvernois had seen an unknown man with a male member of the resistance it may have caused slightly more suspicion. One of the great benefits of being a female member of a resistance network was that it was easier to get around the Germans and Vichy patrol, both alone and with a male, as it did not arouse suspicion. It is possible that this worked in reverse and did not cause the unease that Duvernois may have felt at meeting an unknown man without a female presence. It is also important to note that he automatically calls Mathilde a slut, invoking the opinion that many had of French women who associated with the Germans. They were automatically assumed to be guilty of some sort of “horizontal collaboration” with the enemy, and automatically scorned. As Robert

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<sup>185</sup> Carré, *I was the Cat*, 108.

Gildea argued, “to have sex [with the Germans] was a challenge to the French family, community, and country,” so women who had relationships with the Germans were often viewed with a sense of suspicion.<sup>186</sup> To see Carré with a German man was thus an ultimate betrayal. Also, in this instance, Carré was able to use her image of resistance to collaborate. Although she did not have much of a say in the matter, because she was known to be part of a resistance network, her collaboration was much more effective as she did not arouse suspicion.

Once she was Bleicher’s captive, Carré worked hard to develop a relationship with him that eventually led to a trust between the two - or at least led to him trusting her. She recounted that the night that she slept with Bleicher was “the greatest act of cowardice in [her] life;” that “it was a purely animal cowardice, the reaction of a body which had survived its first night in prison, had suffered cold, felt the icy breath of death and suddenly felt warmth once more in a pair of arms... even if they were the arms of the enemy.”<sup>187</sup> When she woke up the next morning, she claimed to have had a new sense of determination to make the Germans pay and to find a way to start resisting again. Although she was completely horrified by her actions, it did help keep her safe and protected her from suspicion of any resistance activities she concocted. She recalled that Bleicher “loved France and his little ‘Lily’ who was so adorably French” and she was able to get his permission to go to London where she would carry out her

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<sup>186</sup> Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, 51.

<sup>187</sup> Carré, *I was the Cat*, 115.

plan.<sup>188</sup> When she was getting ready to go to England to have her revenge by helping the resistance, Bleicher defended her plans by telling a doubtful colonel that he would take responsibility if she betrayed him. “When Bleicher repeated this conversation to [her, she] planted a kiss on his forehead.”<sup>189</sup> Carré played upon their relationship and used her role to make Bleicher trust her, something that likely would not have happened without their intimacy. If Carré was actually able to participate in London resistance, then her gender was her best tool in going back and forth between resistance and collaboration.

### ***Taking a Role - Utilizing Race and State Roles***

Just as women played upon perceived gender norms, they could also utilize expectations based on their racial appearances and their positions within the state. This section encompasses both race and state roles because of the ways in which the two were often entwined. The value that race played in Nazi society necessarily dictated how individuals were allowed to participate in the workforce and the state structure. Race is considered first because manipulating racial expectations along the spectrum did not always involve participation in a specific job. State roles, however, were often founded upon notions of race and only those of superior quality could hold certain positions. Thus, the racial identifications and accompanying expectations gave people opportunities to manipulate the system. Although there was an ideal Aryan image, its subjectivity made it easier to infiltrate. The quest to identify ethnic Germans in the east, Doris Bergen argues, was exceedingly arbitrary and based more often than not

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<sup>188</sup> Carré, *I was the Cat*, 116.

<sup>189</sup> Carré, *I was the Cat*, 138.

upon appearance.<sup>190</sup> While she focuses on the classification of individuals in the east, in both Germany and France women could play upon racial perceptions to navigate their societies and gain credence in various situations. This is most obvious when examining the many Jewish individuals who were able to hide under false Aryan identities. Women were also able to utilize their state roles and jobs, which provided access to new people and places, and sometimes even prestigious titles that gave them a higher degree of acceptability.

### *Race*

In a state in which race was of the utmost importance, women often played upon ideals of race to navigate the spectrum. Stella Goldschlag held immense value to the Gestapo because she was Jewish, but also looked Aryan - meaning that she could navigate both circles. Her Jewish lineage and experience living underground gave her imperative knowledge to help the Gestapo. Yet this knowledge also enabled her to save people she loved, and because she was known by the Gestapo to have knowledge of where to catch Jews, finding none often led them to assume there were none, not that she was holding back. Her reputation as the “blond poison” worked equally well on the Gestapo and Jews. Not only did it give her the credibility that allowed her to resist, but it also spoke to her success in exploiting the tools the Gestapo felt made her a good agent. Being Jewish gave Stella access to both resistance and collaboration activities and allowed her to roam in both spaces - although eventually she was fairly well

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<sup>190</sup> Doris Bergen, “Sex, Blood, and Vulnerability: Women Outsiders in German-Occupied Europe” in *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* Eds. Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfuz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 275.

known by Jews and they avoided her. Marthe Cohn, a French Jewish woman, was also able to go out without wearing the star because of her blonde hair and blue eyes. As she also spoke German, in the final years of the war she became a valuable asset for getting information from Germans. She took on the identity of a German woman named Martha Ulrich, a German nurse searching the lines for her fiancé, so that she could gather information.<sup>191</sup> By utilizing the racial ideals of the Aryans, as well as her gender, Cohn was able to infiltrate into German territory without arousing suspicion.

When Edith Beer and her fiancé, Werner, got married, she used her false papers to prove she was Aryan so that the marriage would be approved. When she went to the registrar, he noticed the lack of her grandmother's racial papers, pointing out that without those papers her racial identity could not be established. He told her "she may have been a Jewess. Which means that yourself may be a Jewess." In response, she "gasped in simulated horror and squinted at him as though [she] thought he had gone mad." By appearing horrified by the notion that she could not be racially "pure" Edith was able to convince the registrar that she was racially valuable. After looking at her for a moment, he told her that "it is obvious just from looking at you that you could not possibly be anything but a pure-blooded Aryan" and proceeded to give her the marriage license.<sup>192</sup> Perhaps in part because racial ideals were so subjective, Edith was able to get away with this - something that would not have been possible had she been marrying a man with a higher position in the party or SS. However, she was able to appeal

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<sup>191</sup> Cohn, *Behind Enemy Lines*, 138.

<sup>192</sup> Beer, *The Nazi Officer's Wife*, 214.

to the image of the Aryan race through her distress at racial impurity and, as a result, was able to bypass the system without being discovered.

### *State Roles*

Women were able to utilize their roles within the state to navigate the spectrum of resistance and collaboration. Although this was much more common in Germany than in France, it did occur in both countries. Teachers, for example, were able to use their position for their own means. Claire Chevrillon wrote in her memoirs of two women, Annie Billoud and Elizabeth de Bie, who housed her in 1943. She wrote that these two women, although not part of any organized group, “‘resisted’ in their daily lives” as they taught history and French, which allowed them to “speak of certain traditional moral values that were currently being infringed.”<sup>193</sup> Promoting French moral values through teaching French and history emphasized the need to preserve and revitalize France by remembering those values instead of following the path vocalized by Vichy and the Nazis. When Hiltgunt Zassenhaus ran into her former high school teacher Miss Brockdorf who forced her to adhere to Nazi rules later in the war, she discovered that Brockdorf had a Jewish roommate. She told Zassenhaus that “to protect her I had to go along with them,” ultimately using her pro-Nazi position as a teacher as a way to keep her friend alive.<sup>194</sup> While teaching a new generation of Nazis to adhere to Nazi policy, she herself had been using her job as a cover to resist at home. Other women could be helpful because of their job. Elizabeth Terrenoire focuses on women working in food card distribution, noting that “in

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<sup>193</sup> Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane*, 118.

<sup>194</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 68

spite of the surveillance and danger, [they] largely contributed to the revitalization of the young *réfractaires*.”<sup>195</sup> By providing false food cards and other papers, women who ran the system also helped undermine it and save the lives of many individuals.

Much of Hiltgunt Zassenhaus' collaboration, and in this way her ability to continue resisting, depended on her creating a certain image of herself. She played the part of a German loyal to country and Führer, and she used her position within the Department of Justice and her connection to the Gestapo to her advantage. When the Warden of the prison found out she had allowed the minister to read from the Bible, for example, he threatened her, telling her “Didn't I tell you what will happen to those who are helping the enemy?” In response, Hiltgunt replied, “I suggest you be more careful with your wording.... Who do you think I am?”<sup>196</sup> Hiltgunt was able to utilize the paranoia that permeated the Nazi regime by indicating the possibility of working with the Gestapo. The Warden responded with appropriate terror and gave her as much autonomy as she wanted in her position. By relying on her role within the Nazi structure, Hiltgunt was able to play a more important part in her resistance activities. Women in Germany held positions of relative power that women in France did not have, allowing women in Germany perhaps much greater access to collaboration. Women could use their positions to their advantage, choosing to use their collaboration as a tool to resist.

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<sup>195</sup> Elisabeth Terrenoire, *Les Femmes dans la Résistance : Combattantes sans Uniform* (Bloud et Gay, 1946), 26.

<sup>196</sup> Zassenhaus, *Walls*, 96.

Unlike French women, many German women entered occupied territories once the Nazis found they needed more hands in the east with so many men fighting on the fronts. Historian Elizabeth Harvey argues that the rhetoric of male destruction and female construction permeated the east, but that in reality women were also involved in destruction.<sup>197</sup> German women went east as teachers, nurses, camp guards, SS wives, and resettlement workers. Harvey notes that many women were “motivated by a thirst for new experiences and wartime adventure.” As Wendy Sarti argues, “not all women wanted to be consigned to domestic work and sought ways to become involved with the Nazis,” particularly by going east.<sup>198</sup> Yet many were also forced to go. Regardless of how and why women ended up in the east, once there, they too navigated a spectrum of resistance and collaboration, yet on a different level. These women were often directly exposed and fully aware of the violence in the east. As Lower argues, “in the Nazi power hierarchy, the fact of shared race between husband and wife could trump the inequities of gender. German women mimicked men doing the dirty work of the regime - the work that was necessary for the future existence of the Reich - because they were racial equals.”<sup>199</sup> Some women felt they had to prove themselves to the men. Yet even though women were expected to participate in more violent spaces, they were still judged based on gender expectations.

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<sup>197</sup> Elizabeth Harvey: “‘We Forgot all Jews and Poles’: German Women and the ‘Ethnic Struggle’ in Nazi-Occupied Poland” in *Contemporary European History* Vol. 10 No. 3 (2001), 458.

<sup>198</sup> Sarti, *Women and the Nazis*, 5.

<sup>199</sup> Lower, *Hitler’s Furies*, 62.



Melita Maschmann was involved in the resettlement process in Poland. She oversaw several other girls, and they had to send away the occupants of various villages, clean the houses, and get them ready for the new German occupants. At one point, she had to partake in “‘special action’ against the villagers” which required her to expel the current Polish residents. As she notes in her memoirs, this “required a different temperament from ours to watch unmoved as whole families were driven from their ancestral farms.”<sup>200</sup>

Maschmann described this particular job as “harmful to the girls” and more fit for men.<sup>201</sup> Harvey argues that men sometimes attempted to “shield women from the sight and knowledge of forced expulsions” due to gendered notions of racial policy in the east, and that this allowed some women to opt out from knowing too much - or gave them a way to deny their knowledge.<sup>202</sup> Although Maschmann did not use her gender as an excuse to not participate, she did emphasize that the job was particularly trying for women, perhaps to gain some sympathy.

Maschmann did use her position to resist, as well, even though she was fairly enthusiastic about Nazism. She recalls at one point that the children she encountered were often frightened of her uniform, although she had much sympathy for them. This illuminates how perspective influences how individuals were labelled. To the Polish, the uniform that Maschmann wore meant that she was strictly a collaborator. At one point, however, she “wrested a girl of perhaps eight from the hands of a sentry” and proceeded to return to the girl the bucket

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<sup>200</sup> Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, 121.

<sup>201</sup> Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, 121.

<sup>202</sup> Harvey, “We Forgot All Jews and Poles,” 456.

she dropped when she ran away by tossing it towards the bushes where she and the other children hid.<sup>203</sup> She noted that the soldier “could not make head or tail of [her] intervention” likely because of the uniform she was wearing and the expectations that the position held.<sup>204</sup> At another instance, she refused to report a boy who was stealing corn for a resistance group. Her position in the east allowed to her resist and collaborate while wearing the same uniform.

Female concentration camp guards also operated along the spectrum. Anna Fest, for example, supervised several female prisoners in Allendorf and later Sömmerda. She considered herself lucky that she did not have to work inside the camp; instead she walked the prisoners to and from the plant. Fest recalled that “it was quite a burden on [her] nerves” and claimed that she did try to help the prisoners when she could.<sup>205</sup> She remembered that sometimes she “would arrive in the morning carrying my pocketbook with the cake for me. And when we were out of sight, I’d divide it to give them each a piece. Or I’d bring a few pairs of socks with me or once a sweater, which naturally I was *never* allowed to do.”<sup>206</sup> Of course, whether or not Fest actually helped these people is questionable. Yet her noting that it was difficult on her nerves shows how she played upon her female role, whether in actuality to get a different position or in her retelling to claim her innocence, or both. Fest was not there of her own free will, and after the Allies invaded she provided the document that proved she did not volunteer in order to escape punishment.

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<sup>203</sup> Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, 65.

<sup>204</sup> Maschmann, *Account Rendered*, 65.

<sup>205</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 321.

<sup>206</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 320.

Others were much more violent. Maria Mandl, for instance, was notorious for her cruelty. According to survivors in her camp, she “enjoyed setting her dogs on prisoners so that the inmates would run towards the electrified fences, killing them. If any prisoner looked at her and she interpreted the glance as an insult, the prisoner would disappear. She would send people to their death for any reason, whether they were designated for selection or not.”<sup>207</sup> However, one survivor recounted a young girl who went up to Mandl complaining of her hunger, and Mandl sent her to get food from the supply office.<sup>208</sup> Perhaps most fascinating is how this guard sometimes took on a much more maternal role in the camp, only to eventually adhere to the expectations of her position. She encountered a young Polish toddler who “ran up to her” while waiting for the “shower.... Instead of kicking him away, she bent to pick him up, covered his face with kisses, and carried him off. For a week she took him wherever she went, giving him chocolates and dressing him in fresh blue outfits daily, the finest from the piles of confiscated children’s clothing. Then, suddenly, the child was gone. Mandl had personally delivered him to the gas chamber, honoring her Nazi loyalties above any human feeling.”<sup>209</sup> It is difficult to determine exactly how this fits into the spectrum. Did the week she took on this little boy count as an instance of resistance? Did others consider her saving his life to be an act of opposition, or just another of her whims? Ultimately, she murdered this little boy,

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<sup>207</sup> Sarti, *Women and Nazis*, 134.

<sup>208</sup> Sarti, *Women and Nazis*, 134.

<sup>209</sup> Sarti, *Women and Nazis*, 133.

but what did those days of survival mean to him - and to those who saw her taking care of the boy? What did it mean to her?

Erna Petri, the wife of an SS man who was sent to a Polish plantation, also had a moment of maternalism that conflicted with her position. In the summer of 1943, on her way back from town, Petri noticed “children crouching on the side of the road, dressed in shreds of clothing” who she assumed to be Jewish. She offered to take them home with her, where she fed them and calmed them down, all the while waiting anxiously for her husband to come home to get rid of them. Petri knew that the policy was to capture and kill any Jews who were found in the countryside, and after waiting for a while, decided to do the deed herself. She lined them up outside in front of a ditch, and shot them one by one.<sup>210</sup> Although she did not intend to save the children she discovered, she did take them in and feed them, displaying some sort of maternal behavior toward the hungry children. By feeding these children, was she in some way feeding the “enemy”? Was the kindness she showed to these children not some small act of opposition to the violence that was expected? While Petri did not intend for them to live, she also did not originally plan to kill them herself, but to wait for her husband. When she was later interrogated about the situation, she “referred to the anti-Semitism of the regime and her own desire to prove herself to the men.”<sup>211</sup> Because of her location in the east, Petri was exposed to situations that women back in Germany and France were not and had different expectations placed upon her. Her desire to live up to masculine ideas of

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<sup>210</sup> Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 132-133.

<sup>211</sup> Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 4.

violence was common among many women who went east. Yet, contemporaries judged her more harshly because she was a mother and therefore expected to be nonviolent, especially towards other children. In this case, women in the east found themselves bound by expectations based on their positions in the state that often conflicted with the gender expectations of society. Such positions allowed them small acts of resistance, although some of these acts were quickly stifled by collaboration, whether based on personal beliefs or coercion.

***Conclusion: Playing a Part and the Importance of Perception***

In order to navigate the spectrum successfully, women tended to manipulate societal expectations. This mostly encompassed gender roles and ideas of women. Typically, women were constructed by society to embody the idealized mother/housewife, the apolitical and unintelligent woman, and the overly sexualized woman. Although these stereotypes of women permeated both French and German society, the stereotypes surrounding race were just as prevalent and women also utilized race to manipulate the system. While Marthe Cohn tried to exemplify the German woman by applying no makeup and wearing a plain dress, Lucie Aubrac put on her best dress and brought her lipstick with her appealing not only to feminine ideals but specifically how the Germans viewed French women.<sup>212</sup> When utilizing gender roles was not enough, women could also use their race and their positions within the state to navigate the system. Just as society held expectations for the two genders, they also had

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<sup>212</sup> Cohn, *Behind Enemy Lines*, 226.; Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, 79.

presumptions about how individuals would act based on their race as well as their jobs.

Regardless of how women chose to act along the spectrum and which parts they played, perception played an imperative role in their success or failure. Although many women were not merely resisters or collaborators, after the war they tended to be labeled as such by their peers, sometimes with horrifying results. Thus, not only was perception important in how women were able to navigate the spectrum for their own means, but also in terms of how they were classified after the war. After all, to an unknowing eye, a young woman in France flirting with a German could be labelled a collaborator without much thought; being in contact with Germans was enough to end in having one's head shaved for many women. However, this same woman may have been carrying clandestine documents or radios for a resistance group. Having a group to verify one's activities could prove to be life-saving. And of course, not everyone acted in groups. Many women worked by themselves to overcome their own daily wartime struggles.

Lise Lesevre, a French woman working with the resistance, encountered Lucienne Bois while Lesevre was in prison. Bois had formerly been a part of a resistance group, but had been forced to work with Barbie in order to save her own life. When she saw Lesevre, Bois noted her surprise and told her that "what I do I do for the French. You will know that after. And I will have great need of you to support me...You can be a witness in my favor, if I have difficulties."<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Lise Lesevre, *Face à Barbie: Souvenirs-Cauchemars de Montluc à Ravensbruck* (Paris: Les Nouvelles Editions du Pavillion, 1987), 69.

Lesevre struggled to believe this, and was convinced that Bois was really just working with Barbie and trying to extract more information about Lesevre's son and husband to hurt them. Whether or not Bois actually tried to resist in her situation, she illuminates the importance of having someone to prove that one was actually not collaborating. Thus, many women who did go back and forth between resistance and collaboration may have faced the problem of verification, which may in part account for why many women were categorized into one group or the other.

Stella Hittet also exemplifies this problem. A young woman in France, Hittet became involved in various resistance activities once the French and German occupants started to persecute the Jews, as her fiancé was Jewish. Since she had British identity, the two took on false papers in order to avoid being detained. Her fiancé was involved in a resistance organization known as Arc-en-Ciel, and through his connections she was able to help various pilots and Polish soldiers escape to Spain so they could join Charles de Gaulle. However, when the *milice* arrested her for being a suspected Jew, the Gestapo followed her and asked her to join them to work against the French *maquis*. She accepted, claiming that it allowed her to aid her friends and “become a precious help for her people.” When she informed a man in Paris to avoid his getting caught by the Gestapo, they arrested her and eventually sent her to Ravensbruck. At one point she was sent to work in a factory and continued to “br[eak] every machine [she] had to work with.” She was interned by the Americans after the war, and in the Civilian Internment Enclosure it states that she

“claims to be a parachutist spy for British and French... [and] a secret agent in Paris; however... she does not know what her mission was and quite obviously knows nothing about the operation of a parachute. (This person is either a psychopathic case, an irretrievable liar, or an espionage agent for the Germans. Her story is fantastic beyond feasibility.)”<sup>214</sup> While it is impossible to know exactly what Hittet did during the war, if her story is true then she was able to navigate between a resistance organization and the Gestapo. However, because no one was able to verify her participation in the resistance group, the idea that she could have been both resisting and collaborating was dismissed.

Ultimately, the ways in which women manipulated gender and racial roles depended on their ability to shape perceptions. If women were able to wield this power they had the opportunity to move throughout the spectrum by playing on expectations. By playing the part of stereotypical gender and racial ideals, women could switch back and forth between resistance and collaboration.

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<sup>214</sup> James H. Critchfield Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.



## Conclusion

Examining the spectrum of resistance and collaboration highlights the agency that women possessed as they navigated their wartime societies. Declining black and white identifiers allows for a greater understanding of the choices of individuals in wartime France and Germany. These decisions were often fluid, contradictory, and blurry. By no means were people entrapped on one end of the spectrum of resistance and collaboration. Personal relationships, convictions, goals, families, and the need to survive drove individuals to participate in a wide variety of activities throughout the spectrum. Although both men and women were actively involved, women moved more seamlessly along the spectrum because of their position in society. Unlike most men, women occupied the home front where they faced everyday decisions that meant life or death not only for themselves but also their families. Resistance or collaboration could lead to desperately needed food or necessary goods. Of course, not all women remained on the home front. Yet women not only (usually) occupied different physical spaces, they had distinct social expectations. Women's presumed roles as mothers and wives, and as apolitical and less intelligent (educated?) members of society enabled them to escape notice regardless of their actual lifestyle. Women were more believable when they assumed feminine roles, which ultimately gave them the best possible disguise.

Although analyzing women according to expected social categories may perpetuate female stereotypes, this thesis is more concerned with how they enhanced female agency. These ideals were central to the mindset of France

and Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, making it plausible for women to use them to their own advantage. Both men and women could, to varying degrees, utilize their gender expectations as a means to achieve their goals, although not everyone was cognizant of the ways in which they could manipulate gender assumptions. Gender roles were exceedingly important to both the French and the Germans, as indicated by how important familial structures were in their state policies. As Annie Kienast noted, “the Nazis saw women as stupid and only fit to be good housewives and mothers.”<sup>215</sup> Often, this need to view women as mothers was blinding, making it difficult to see beyond the image that many desired. Particularly early in the war, this perspective on women made it possible for them to easily move throughout the spectrum as they were not suspected of being able to shift from the center of the spectrum, much less to the far ends. In this way, they were able to act as invisible agents within society—seen but never truly considered a threat. Femininity often served as a cover for women to act in ways that directly contradicted the notions of what women should be.

Nazi Germany was a race-based society, and in many ways, so was France, especially during the occupation. While it is unfair to claim that only the German occupiers subjected the French to racial scrutiny, it was of course the terms of the Nazi idealized racial hierarchy that dictated personal value in both France and Germany. Thus, women could also play upon the Aryan ideal as a way to navigate the spectrum when gender alone could not divert suspicion.

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<sup>215</sup> Matthew Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 134.

Much of the classification of Aryan individuals was done on a simple level based on appearances and perception; as such, even those who technically were not Aryan could occasionally pass for Aryan if they knew how to play their cards right. With Aryan looks, even those considered to be racially inferior, such as Jews or Poles, could sometimes pass through the streets largely unnoticed. On the other hand, Jewish individuals could also use their community ties (likely perceived by the Nazis to be racial connections) to collaborate with the Nazis and help them catch fellow Jews in hiding.

Women were able to go back and forth between resistance and collaboration on many levels. Those who had relationships that placed them in positions of collaboration were also able to use that to their advantage, such as Emmy Goering who helped some Jewish acquaintances escape or the woman in France who used her relationship with a German to get her French husband back from Germany. Some women who were in resistance networks were later forced to become collaborators, and some women had to work with the Gestapo. Yet even though to this extent they collaborated, they were also able to resist in small ways. Other women were party members themselves and supported the Nazis, but this did not stop them from offering assistance to others especially if they were family or friends. Many grew disillusioned with the Nazis by 1943 or 1944 when the war made life excessively difficult for those on the home front.

An analysis based on similarities in spite of differences demonstrates how a shift in perception of resistance and collaboration was also tied to a shift in how women's actions were judged. During the war, mothers who were actively

involved in the resistance movements were portrayed as lacking in motherly skills. Similarly, women who had their heads shaved in postwar France for collaborating in hopes of keeping their family safe were vilified as being bad mothers. The role reversal largely ignored the ways in which women's actions did in fact fit into societal expectations. Instead it shifted blame and shame of the nation to the women themselves. This approach also demonstrates the agency that individual women had during the war. These women were not content to do nothing; they took great risks to protect themselves and their families and chose to follow their values and beliefs. The notion of a spectrum of resistance and collaboration invites a slew of further research. How does class fit into the spectrum? How did women in other countries fit into this notion, and how did it shift when the Nazis occupied a nation? It also is not applicable exclusively to women. It would be fascinating to determine how masculinity factored into the spectrum and if an examination of masculinity would yield as many disguises. Or were men confined more to a mask based upon race or job?

Although after the war women were placed into distinct categories, it is problematic to accept such labels at face value. Women who had relationships with Germans in France and those considered collaborators in Germany often had their heads shaved publically to humiliate them. Women were often blamed for the moral downfall of both countries. However, many of those who collaborated also had their moments of resistance. And those who resisted often pretended to collaborate to get past officials or had no choice but to cooperate with the state on some level. The war and the circumstances that women found

themselves in were too messy for an easy dichotomy. Instead, women moved fluidly between each group, both resisting and collaborating. On both sides of the spectrum, women were motivated by their families, their relationships, the pressures of survival, ideology and self-advancement among other things. They did the best that they could have done in their circumstances, and even those women who committed terrible crimes may have done what they thought right for their own reasons. Instead of forcing women into a category, one must be willing to address the blurry areas and the seemingly contradictory actions. The nuanced experiences of women during the war in France and Germany are obscured if they are merely given the title of resister or collaborator.

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