WILL THE NEW GERMAN MAN
PLEASE STAND UP?
HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN NAZI
PROPAGANDA AND GERMAN CINEMA

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PLEASE STAND UP?

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ABSTRACT

Between 1933 and 1945, under the supervision of Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, the propaganda of the Nazi Party, and later the German government, preached a message of absolute devotion to the state based around principles derived from hegemonic ideals of masculinity and hyper-conservative social policies. It was during the Second World War that propaganda, utilizing both fictional and nonfictional visual content, emphasized a message of total submission of the body to the state and the will of the nation to sacrifice itself for its own institutions. This was communicated through the condemnation of infidelity, the rendering of rebellious and independent women to the role of the mother and homemaker, and the display of boys willing to fulfill the call to arms and become cannon fodder. None of the more graphic implications or ramifications of this behavior would be displayed in order to preserve what Erving Goffman (1956) refers to as the “front” (pp. 13). This concept of the front, the performance by an individual meant to connote personal or even hegemonic ideals, helps to frame propaganda as more persuasive, giving the viewer just enough realism to believe in the message, without presenting the harsh reality of the situation.

The illusion of the performance would dissolve in the decades following Germany’s defeat in the Second World War. In the films produced in postwar Germany
both before and after the Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962, examples of Nazi propaganda are present in the messages. These messages conceptualize a masculine ideal from that period. In films like *The Bridge* (1959), *Young Torless* (1966), and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980), formulations of a warrior masculinity (Digby, 2014), complicit masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), and hyper-masculinity (Jewkes et al., 2015) respectively are presented and established in the front that the films execute. These types of hegemonic masculinity become the subject of critique as the decorum of the film shifts from the front to the “backstage” (Goffman, 1956, pp. 67), where the rhetoric of the performer is less restrained and positive and more relaxed and/or profane. This shift also leads to a shift from the idealistic to the realistic, as the negative consequences of the actions of those individuals who embody these forms of hegemonic masculinity are made apparent.

The following thesis applies historical framing analysis to seven sample texts, four that were produced by Germany during the Second World War, and three produced in postwar Germany. This analysis looks to illustrate a “national community” frame within the selected works, based on hegemonic ideals of masculinity and German social policy passed under the Nazi party. Recurring messages within Nazi propaganda produced before the Second World War in both fictional and nonfictional visual media content serve as the basis for this frame’s existence. The sampled propaganda texts are *March to the Fuhrer* (1940), *Victory in the West* (1941), *The Great Love* (1942), and *The Great Sacrifice* (1944). The sampled post-war texts are the previously mentioned *The Bridge* (1959), *Young Torless* (1966), and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980). This analysis also looks to demonstrate the intersection of fictional and nonfictional media content.
Specifically, it showcases how fictional content can reinforce certain messages and how they are communicated within a given sociopolitical context but can also how challenge and subvert the messages of the past to write a new chapter of history.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The rise of the Nazi Party was marked by the return to masculine ideals in government policy and social practice. After taking control of the German government, beginning with Adolf Hitler’s election as Chancellor in 1933 (Loroff, 2011; Nagel, 1998), the Nazi Party took measures to indoctrinate the population into their hyper-conservative ideology through coded and/or explicit messages expressed through propaganda (Appleby, 2013; Buscemi, 2016; Moeller, 1997; Reimer, 2000). These messages focused on, among other things, biological and mental purity, valor resulting from self-sacrifice, and an absolute, uncompromising commitment to the “fatherland” (Welch, 1983, pp. 202). This meant that the population was subjugated to act as agents of nationwide preservation of the German family and the German military, which failed to succeed in certain cases. The father was revered as the protector, the provider, but not the model for the household as the Führer served as the symbol of a masculine ideal in the eyes of the son (Appleby, 2013) and the father (Jerome, 2001). The mother was the nurturer for the children and the object of the father, and the daughter would succeed her with a family of her own (Appleby, 2013; McCloskey, 2012; Nagel, 1998). The son would become the fodder, the hero who never made it home, whose sacrifice would cement his legacy as a symbol of Nazi heroism (Appleby, 2013; Giesen, 2003; Welch, 2004). It was the perfect family to serve as the foundation of an idea of “national community” (Appleby, 2013). However, this ideal would not last.

In the decades following Germany’s surrender in the Second World War, depictions of masculine identity became more relaxed as German civilians feared a return to the militarized, overly aggressive men of Nazi Germany (Poiger, 1998). Thus, West
German government officials saw the possibilities in introducing a new German man through film (Davidson, 1999; Fehrenbach, 1995). While the initial purpose of using cinema as a cultural tool was for political work abroad to establish a new image of Germany, West German artists worked to deconstruct and subvert the ideals that were present in Nazi propaganda decades prior. These filmmakers were concerned with matters of the empathetic connection between subject and audience, the naked brutality of war, the provocation of misogynistic behavior from disparities of wealth and power, and a demonstration that the nation has moved forward and has reunited itself with the Western world, ideologically speaking. Previous research has featured the discussion of how certain filmmakers have been critical of the past through their work. The research materials gathered have so far focused on how these works contrast from the ideology of the Nazi Party.

**Rationale for Study**

As it pertains to presentations or criticism of a masculine ideal within a society, this thesis argues for the merits of cinema as a lens that has influence on perceptions of history. The thesis stresses the importance of fictional messages as on a level similar to nonfictional messages. As Appel and Richter (2007) state in their article on the persuasive effects of fictional narratives, previous research has suggested that it is possible for fictional media to “alter” one’s view of the world (pp. 114). In their study, they conclude that fictional media plays an important role in the “socialization” of audiences of any age (pp. 129). Though one is situated within reality through usage of documentary and newsreel footage, the placement of the other within the then not-too-distant past of Germany transforms these texts into meditations on the relationship
between a nation’s history and its people. The characters of the fictional propaganda texts signify an ideal for a target audience. For the postwar texts, these characters act as representations of German citizens who were the primary targets for the propaganda messages. Though these characters may never have truly lived, what they represent is nonetheless crucial to understanding German history and can help prevent the return to fascism as a new wave of right-wing populism sweeps Western Europe.

**Purpose for the Study**

There are two main purposes for this analysis. First, this thesis illustrates how Nazi propaganda era films show individual performances as a representation of national community. Second, this thesis looks to compare representations of ideal gender norms in Nazi-propaganda films with ideal gender norms in post-war West German cinema. Though fixed ideas of gender performance are present in works of Nazi propaganda, both during and prior to the Second World War, it is necessary to state that such ideations of performativity do not originate from the propaganda or ideology of the party. Rather, as the sampled texts demonstrate, ideas of gender performance that the party promoted in its messaging had already taken root by the time of the party’s ascension to political prominence in the 1920s and 1930s. As the historical research gathered for this thesis suggests, there was strategic reasoning for the focus on gender in the propaganda produced prior to and during the war. For the soldiers who had previously fought for Germany in the First World War, allegiance with the Nazi Party posed an opportunity to regain the dignity that was stripped from them by a country that they believe abandoned them. Whether you were a prisoner or a survivor, your honor only came with your death; you returned a failure. German WWI veterans thus became a primary target of
propaganda messaging early on, and this idea of reclaiming lost honor carried over into the mission of German invasion throughout Europe. If you were to risk your life for your country once again, you would return a hero. But as media texts that were produced following Germany’s defeat, the opposite was the case and those who died did so for a lost cause. Injury and loss meant nothing of what made a German man but what made another victim of the Nazi-promoted ideals of masculinity.

The following thesis addresses how “national community” messaging is present in selected sample texts that were produced during the Second World War and how exactly the idea of national community manifests in relation with hegemonic masculine performance in each propaganda text. Within the findings from these texts is the national community frame that is then analyzed in comparison to the messaging of fictional media texts created following the Second World War. The comparative analysis considers how the messaging of the national community frame is subverted or criticized by these postwar texts regarding the presentation of masculine hegemony. The analysis also demonstrates how omission of the consequences of gender performance affects the outcome of the narrative presented and that such omissions help to promote messaging that can harm its audience. While it can’t be stated how exactly the national community messaging in Nazi propaganda negatively affected its audience, what can be drawn from the messages in conjunction with the historical material gathered are the roles the German populous was to play for its government.

The literature review establishes how theories of framing and gender performance are relevant to the discussion of Nazi propaganda messages and how such approaches will be utilized for the analysis. Historical material on the ideals of the Nazi party,
specifically regarding the military and the preferred social roles of the German citizens, are included to establish the goals of the party in both their governance and their messaging. These ideals are connected to gender presentation and performance based on the information accumulated on social policy and stigmatization of nonhegemonic gender and sexual performativity. This section also establishes the primary targets of propaganda messaging at this time and the rationale of the propaganda minister for targeting these specific populations within Germany. Following the war, the West German government and its citizens wished to address how the actions of the previous government could be remedied and prevented from occurring in the future. The focus of the former was on how stimulating the arts within the nation could repair its international image and its relationship with other nations abroad. German citizens, meanwhile, were obstinate to any further investment in military action and were hesitant to embrace any form of masculine representation remotely resembling the masculine hegemony of Nazi Germany. From this came a series of movements within West German cinema where the filmmakers focused on how Germany coped with its history while maintaining a critical posturing of its current government. While it served a function for the nation’s perception abroad, the filmmakers of this period were not working in tandem with their elected officials. Instead the filmmakers chose to showcase a Germany as they saw it, past and present.

The chapter on research methodology outlines how rhetorical framing analysis is applied in connection with theories of gender performance put forth by Erving Goffman and Judith Butler. The sampled texts for the comparative analysis are divided into sections based on their time of production and then divided further into fictional and
nonfictional subcategories. The sampled texts are coded for the performer(s), the hegemonic ideals communicated through the performance(s), responses to nonhegemonic behavior or action, and the positive and negative outcomes of the performance(s). The findings gathered are then assessed collectively to better solidify the differences in each section. The findings are interpreted based on how they communicate gender and homosocial interaction and power dynamics, the relationship between masculine identity and the state, and the presence of sacrifice and its connection to masculine hegemony. The two sections are then compared based on what is omitted from the propaganda texts that is present in the postwar texts, analyzing the significance of the backstage setting in relation to the decorum of the front.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Framing Theory

The key to understanding how a message is intended to be received is to identify how the narrative is being framed and what elements of the narrative are featured more prominently than others. The concept of framing is defined as the selection of “some aspects of a perceived reality and constructing messages that highlight connections among them in ways that promote a particular interpretation” (Entmann, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009, pp. 176). As frames have multiple locations within the communicator, text, receiver, and culture (deVreese, 2005), framing is believed to be both a strategic tool for political purposes and a process of individual consumption (Entmann, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009, pp. 175). Through frame-building, “the frames manifest in the text” (deVreese, 2005, pp. 52). Within mass media, the frame is identified as the central, organizing idea for making sense of relevant events, arguing what is at issue within a text or what is the issue (deVreese, 2005; Entmann, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009). Frames promote specific interpretations by repeatedly invoking the same objects, using similar or identical symbols and terminology (Corrigan, 1994; Entmann, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009; Scheufele, 1999). For instance, if a message is repeated enough within a certain context, the intended response toward that message can be applied to cases where the message is present or alluded to. Common schemas form the basis for these responses, especially regarding thematic frames that focus on broader variety of trends or issues (Entmann, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009). These schemas manifest from prior knowledge, dispositions, or experiences with media interactions (deVreese, 2005).

Goffman’s Performer
Based on the literature, schemas have the capacity to influence characteristics of social interaction, which can then affect how such interactions are portrayed in a staged or recorded setting. The usage of thematic framing within propaganda messaging reinforces select schemas related to social interaction. Goffman (1956) frames the presentation of self within social interaction as a theatrical “performance” (pp. 13). Referring to it as a “front,” he defines this idea of a performance as encompassing “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his [or her] continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (pp. 13). The performer “will tend to incorporate…officially accredited values of society” (pp. 23), from which the observer(s) may subsequently identify socially idealized impressions. These are often expressions stressing a “higher class-status” than what in normal circumstances would have accorded him (pp. 24).

In these cases, the individual performer would often forego certain actions or customs that though consistent with the real-life practices of the individual are inconsistent with the ideals the performer is intending to uphold. Goffman says, “a sacrifice is made not for the visible ideal but rather for the most legitimately important one” (pp. 29). Depending on the performance, this can be relative. This is in part due to the socialization of the performance and its intended/expected response. The region and behavior in which the actions are located manipulate the definition of the performance, contextualizing it (1956). But there are matters of what is conventionally thought of as a geographic region and what Goffman poses as front and backstage regions, returning to his framing of social action as theatrical performance. Goffman describes backstage conduct as interactions which are more symbolically intimate and disrespectful, as the
language of the individuals is more relaxed, callous, and profane whereas the language of the front is more restrained, positive, and performative (1956). The location of the performance establishes whether matters of the performer’s decorum are deemed appropriate. Goffman defines decorum as, “the way in which the performer comports himself while in visual or aural range of the audience but not necessarily engaged in talk with them” (pp. 67). Specific classifications of decorous behavior are relative to their acceptability within a given region. Acceptability is based on the two subgroups within decorum: moral requirements and instrumental requirements (1956). The former are the “rules regarding sexual propriety, rules regarding respect for sacred places, etc.” while the latter are “duties such as an employer might demand of his employees—care of property, maintenance of work levels, etc.” (pp. 67). The region in which the performance takes place, based on their decorous traditions, can make the performance more restrained, exchanging the more realistic and less reverent dialect of the backstage in favor of the ideals of the front.

This idea of Goffman of the concealment of certain actions for the benefit of the public audience is also applied in settings of commercial practice. Calling these actions “dirty work,” Goffman says, “When an individual presents a product to others, he will tend to show them only the end-product, and they will be led into judging him on the basis of something that has been finished, polished, and packaged” (pp. 28). The performance in these scenarios refrains from allowing the evidence of such work to be made apparent to the audience. These practitioners, Goffman states, undergo a training process meant to “foster the impression that the licensed practitioner is someone set apart from other men” (pp. 29). The intention is to emphasize the matter of choice in the
practitioner’s decision, motivated by personal contribution over the potential compensation for their work.

Regarding individual performance of gender identity, “there is no male or female prior to the cultural engendering of those two categories of identity” (Auslander, 2008, pp. 73). Butler (1988) explains that gender “is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” and the “stylization of the body” (pp. 519). Through the performance of constructed gender identity, the practitioner induces the body to become a “cultural sign”, with Butler recognizing the “fictions” that compel the authors of gender codes to believe in its “necessity and naturalness” (pp. 522). The essentialization of such fictions can lead practitioners to view any subversion of, for example, hegemonic ideals of masculinity, as perversions needing to be corrected, thus marginalizing such individuals. But as Butler claims, “Genders…can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent” (pp. 528). Morris (1995) even refers to certain practices like bodybuilding as comparable to drag, as “both forms of performance draw attention to [the] space…between the lived body and its morphological ideal-type,” with bodybuilding serving as a means of “exploding and defeminizing the body” (pp. 583). With this in mind, it is worth considering other forms of male performance that have been categorized as illustrating a masculine ideal, like fighting in a war, and whether they then constitute drag-like performance. Morris indicates that it is through sex/gender systems that individuals are marked as “being other than ideal” (pp. 573) and it is through their performances symbolizing or lionizing hegemonic gender ideals that they can aspire to rid themselves of this socially constructed sense of failure.

Hegemonic Masculinity
A distinct characteristic of propaganda messaging from the Nazi Party was how it presented its ideals regarding gender. By the time the party took control of German Parliament, these ideals, particularly masculine ideals, had become widely accepted. Hegemony, itself, is understood as “the winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process,” emphasizing “the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination” (Donaldson, 1993, pp. 644). Such maintenance is performed through persuasion of the majority of the population of a given area, as well as punishment (Donaldson, 1993). Connell (1995) defines *hegemonic masculinity* as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (pp. 77). Gender, in itself, involves the correspondence between power structures and social institutions and patterns of individual and societal cognitive and social behaviors (Brandes, 2007; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic gender practices lead to the creation of a normative point of reference (Brandes, 2007; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Donaldson, 1993; Jewkes et al., 2015; Nagel, 1998) that is not necessarily represented in the performance of men (Brandes, 2007; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), meaning it bears closer resemblance to a myth of the patriarchal ideal than typical male performance. As such a myth is reaffirmed within a society, it emphasizes the commodification of relationships with women, and is correlated with control over economic capital and proximity to social and political power (Brandes, 2007).

Power is utilized to make hegemonic structures of masculinity hierarchical. Connell (1987) describes this *hierarchy of masculinity* as the attitudes and practices of
hegemonic masculinity work to perpetuate men’s domination over women and some men. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) elaborated on this idea, “The idea of a hierarchy of masculinities grew directly out of homosexual men’s experience with violence and prejudice from straight men” (pp. 831). Men, those being heterosexual, white men in most contexts (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), are granted the ability to choose to occupy these oppressive masculine positions, and as such, are able to create “multiple” hegemonic masculinities (Jewkes et al., 2015). 

Complicit masculinity, for instance, involves the participation of heterosexual men and women “who receive the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, pp. 832; Jewkes et al., 2015). 

Warrior masculinity, as described by Digby (2014), communicates that in order for the man to be an effective ‘warrior,’ he “must be able to manage the capacity to care about suffering” (pp. 54). This is typically located within the military during wartime, where soldiers are conditioned to either focus selectively or suspend altogether these thoughts on suffering. Under this ideal, manhood is determined by physical and emotional preparedness (2014). As masculinities are often constructed in ways that reflect social and economic power, hyper-masculinity is seen as a consequence of class disparity, as it “often develops among socially marginalized men in urban slums and emphasize power and force” (Jewkes et al., 2015, pp. 114). Men of a lower socio-economic distinction feel overshadowed when compared to images of a dashing, masculine figure of the upper classes (Nagel, 1998). Beyond the flaws implied in the individual distinctions, an additional flaw of masculinity as a hegemonic construct is that “it essentializes the character of men” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, pp. 836), imposing a self-destructive false unity on a fluid reality (Connell & Messerschmidt,
And as children grow up, for instance, they are able to contest these hegemonic patterns in favor of the more fluid reality (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Recent studies have shown that the levels of persuasion between fiction and nonfiction narratives were identical (Brock et al., 2006). Also, that long term belief-change as a result of consuming fictional narratives increased over time (Appel & Richter, 2007). Such fictional persuasion can include the marketing of political ideas and can lead to belief change concerning topics like education and HIV, communicating the possibility that such persuasion methods can lead to the relaxing of certain ideals amongst other consumers (Appel & Richter, 2007). Such practices can be seen today in contemporary American cinema, as films like Barry Jenkins’ *Moonlight* (2016) are offering greater opportunities at providing exposure to more diverse, less aggressive conceptions of masculinity and identity as a whole. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) stated, the flaw of the hegemonic construction of man is that it presents an essentialist understanding of masculinity that is severed from the actual experiences of both men and women. Through the medium of film, people are capable of engaging with a visual narrative that allows the viewer to choose whether the actions of someone demonstrating characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are worthy of praise or criticism. But the overall reflective capability of the medium makes it easier to empathize with the person we are witnessing as the audiovisual experience allows the viewer to see themselves in the person or people onscreen.

**Homosociality**

It is understood that the structural order of hegemonic masculinity is maintained through various hetero- and homosocial interactions within daily life (Bird, 1996; Britton,
1990; Flood, 2008). Through homosocial interactions, clear distinctions amongst the opposing sexes are drawn and behaviors challenging hegemonic masculinity are “denied legitimation as masculine” and are considered “marginalized” (Bird, 1996, pp. 121).

*Homosociality* is defined as “social bonds between persons of the same sex and, more broadly, to same-sex-focused social relations” (Flood, 2008, pp. 341). Non-sexual relationships between men are believed to construct or aid in the construction of acceptable, interiorized or even internalized perceptions of masculine performance, allowing for the maintaining of hegemonic models of masculinity (Bird, 1996; Britton, 1990; Flood, 2008). Thus, through individual performance within collective interaction, ideals will become acknowledged and understood and can lead to participants within this interaction to replicate the behavior in future performances. In male homosocial interactions in particular, performances communicate the presence of emotional detachment, the importance of competition, and the objectification of the opposite sex, rendered an “other” outside of the masculine species (Bird, 1996). The seemingly competitive rhetoric of sexual dialogues amongst men during these homosocial interactions can also serve to commodify intercourse with women (Flood, 2008) and can also serve to reinforce violent tendencies towards those considered the other based on their sexual or gender identity or their gender performance (Britton, 1990; Flood, 2008). This would include women, members of the LGBT community, and even other men who fail to meet the supposed standards of masculine performance.

**Revitalizing Masculinity in Nazi Germany**

For the German soldiers who survived the First World War, the battle represented a chance to engage with their fellow men on the battlefield, lighting a fire extinguished
by defeat. When reflecting on the crisis of masculinity within Germany during the postwar Weimar Republic (1919-1933), historian George Mosse (1996) is drawn to the aftermath of the First World War, which he called a “masculine event” (pp. 107). This conceptualization of the war was framed as such especially in the decade following Germany’s surrender. In the literary works of the time, writers like Ludwig Renn and Erich Remarque in works like “Krieg” (1929) and “All Quiet on the Western Front” (1930) were critical of the reason for fighting “but not the fighting itself” (pp. 108). Their characters exuded courage, endurance, and a calm approach to the battlefield. In reality, soldiers saw the defeat as emasculating. Feltman (2014) refers to a sermon on the plight of German soldiers where the pastor “noted that many prisoners would have preferred to die on the battlefield than surrender to the enemy” (pp. 174). The uncompromising commitment of German soldiers exhibited when fighting in the war was reinforced by German citizens and government officials when the soldiers returned to the Fatherland (Felman, 2014). After the war, the nation “celebrated fallen soldiers while those who fell into enemy hands continued to struggle with the shame and emasculation of their surrender” (pp. 174). These prisoners of war would become scapegoats by the German public, considered to be cowards and traitors whose manhood was called into question (Feltman, 2014). Feltman (2014) later indicates that Adolf Hitler would tap into this degradation experienced by former German soldiers as a means of gathering an early following, encouraging what feminist scholar Dr. Cynthia Enloe would call “masculinized hope” through nationalistic rhetoric (Nagel, 1998, pp. 244). As the progressive social policies of the Weimar Republic led to female emancipation like never before seen in Germany, the response by the Nazi Party’s hyper-conservative ideology
instigated a return to gender norms prior to and of the First World War, where men were the defenders of the homeland and protectors of subordinated women.

Regarding the limitations placed on Germany’s military by the Treaty of Versailles, the document and the war’s fallout were viewed as an emasculation of this masculine, German ideal, and became the subject of vitriolic response from supporters and members of the Nazi Party. Adolf Hitler said to his supporters in the 1920s and 1930s he would “tear up” if brought into power (Appleby, 2013, pp. 4). Members of the party viewed themselves as those Germans who inherited the experience of the war (Loroff, 2011). The new, hypothetical, modern German man was now “rootless” in a “fluid urban environment” and the Nazi Party offered this man “regression to the warm, febrile bonds of the tribal family” and the promise that his life would be valued “above those of the alien and the outgroup” (O’Shaughnessy, 2009, pp. 59).

While boys and young men were appealed to defend the Fatherland, women faced subordination characteristic of hegemonic masculinity of this period. After the First World War, women “achieved a number of political gains including the establishment of female suffrage during the national election in November 1918, which led to the popularization of the women’s emancipation movement” (Loroff, 2011, pp. 51). The Nazis would denounce this movement as a Jewish construct, viewing the “masculinization of women as a significant threat” (Loroff, 2011, pp. 52; Reimer, 2000). As a nationalist movement, the Nazis relegated women to a minor, symbolic role as “icons of nationhood” (Nagel, 1998, pp. 244).

As the life of the traditional German man was valued above a general outgroup, which extended towards non-heterosexual individuals. Gay men were viewed by the
Nazis as “the antithesis of the masculine ideal because they lacked the capacity and mental strength to not give into the physical urges and sexual perversions” (Loroff, 2011, pp. 59). Now while the Nazi Party professed a desire for the formation of a physically and mentally pure master race (Mosse, 1996), the reason for certain exclusions were motivated by practicality rather than solely biological distinctions. While homosexual exclusion is indicative of a hierarchy of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), the Nazi Party believed that “people should approach sex with the purpose of fulfilling national goals rather than pursuing their own pleasure” (Loroff, 2011, pp. 52). A person no longer had an autonomous body, but the Nazis recognized the body as a “public site” (pp. 49). Their understanding of homosexuality led to the conclusion that homosexuality wasted “procreative power” (Moeller, 1997, pp. 259) Nazis saw this perceived obstinance, the refusal to give into sexual urges for the state as was expected of heterosexual men, as a national threat.

**Nazi Propaganda**

The German man was a victim and Nazi propaganda allowed for this idea to be negotiated and conferred by the German public (Buscemi, 2016). Argumentation scholar Douglas Walton (1997) describes propaganda as “a kind of technique that must appeal successfully to the emotions, commitments and enthusiasms of the crowd to win acceptance for a conclusion” (pp. 388). Though this was originally used by the Roman Catholic church in the 16th century as a means to stifle the rise of Lutheranism in Germany (Hoffmann, 1996; Walton, 1997), several political bodies, including the Nazis, co-opted the practice to serve their cause. Reimer (2000) says “all films under the Nazis were propaganda films” (pp. 84), as imports were made unavailable to curb
insubordination and German fictional and nonfictional film production were based on government approved topics and narratives. Doing so eliminated the possibility of utilizing film as a tool for cultural criticism entirely.

To combat fears of the prevalence of homosexual behavior, Nazi propaganda projected the image of gay men as “corruptors of youth” who would “lure ‘normal’ young men into depravity and thus spread the ‘epidemic’ of homosexuality” (Micheler, 2002, pp. 97). But fears of a threat of a homosexual pandemic were again rooted in the idea of the youth as the future of the nation. German boys in particular were taught to “be workers and [loyal] soldiers who would fight to protect their nation” and focus on preserving their physique through physical activities like swimming and military exercises (Appleby, 2013, pp. 5; 6). German youth eventually valued allegiance to the nation above their own families, even becoming spies for the state (Welch, 2004). They were willing to serve and die for their country at the behest of the leadership. Homosexuality, as well as preventative birth control measures like abortion, was seen as threats to the future of the master race (Moeller, 1997). Tying this back to the idea that sex should fulfill the goals of the nation over the individual, it reinforces this notion of uncompromising commitment to the state and the disintegration of individual and corporal autonomy.

The goal of uncompromising commitment bleeds into the purpose of Nazi propaganda, where much of propaganda media from this time was to “instill in the public the sense of national community” (Appleby, 2013, pp. 4). Appleby’s concept of national community focused primarily on the indoctrination of German youth, and while they were a primary target audience of Nazi propaganda, overall it was meant to target
“uneducated masses” in general (Baird, 1974, pp. 17). This frame of national community in Nazi propaganda was presumed rooted in messages of national cohesion (O’Shaughnessy, 2009). During the Second World War, Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels’s concern with propaganda media was “how best to direct the party to summon its reserves of energy and ingenuity in order to influence public opinion, with the goal of mobilizing every citizen to contribute uncompromisingly to the cause of victory” (Baird, 1974, pp. 24). While Goebbels went as far as to argue that this involved “absolute obedience” and “a willingness to die” for the state (Welch, 1983, pp. 202), he also understood that entertainment was a significant tool for communicating these messages effectively (Reimer, 2000). Citing Albrecht (1969), in Goebbels’s speech entitled “Film as Educator,” Goebbels says, “a national leadership…must make it its duty of lovingly and helpfully accompany the people, not only in their concerns, but also in their joys, not only in their burdens, but also in their leisure” (Reimer, 2000, pp. 84). Based on evidence such as Goebbels’s speech, it is argued that “all films under the Nazis were propaganda films” (pp. 84). This would then allow for messages communicating national community and uncompromising commitment to become all-encompassing throughout German media, especially entertainment media.

As was stated earlier, the corporally autonomous individual was virtually nonexistent in Nazi ideology. In response to the socially progressive nature of the Weimar Republic, which the Nazis criticized as superficial and unnatural, National Socialism worked to reinstate “traditional identity categories” where destabilization of such categories was not tolerated (McCormick, 2001, pp. 170). Retention of these categories reinforced rigid definitions for gender identification. For instance, in the First
World War, “manliness symbolized society as a whole and not merely one part of it. The education of manliness was directed toward making boys hard, sculpting their bodies, and giving them proper moral posture” (Mosse, 1996, pp. 109). Mosse (1996) expands on this definition of ideal manliness during World War I by saying that it also involves the urge to serve a higher cause, similar to the messaging of Goebbels’ speeches. The Nazis communicated that “a man could only achieve true manliness by engaging in heroic activities, such as fighting in the war” (Loroff, 2011, pp. 49). This idea is evident in a conversation between Adolf Hitler and propagandist Leni Riefenstahl on the preaching of pacifism by the Catholic Church: “[Hitler] had explained to [Riefenstahl] his hatred of the power of the Catholic church: ‘The church paralyzed the might of the state; it folded the hands of men in prayer instead of clenching their fists for fighting’” (Giesen, 2003, pp. 24). The heroes of Hitler’s no longer emasculated Germany were “fearless, square jawed warriors, eyes alight with fanaticism” (O’Shaughnessy, 2009, pp. 71) who were willing to sacrifice themselves for the state (Loroff, 2011).

“National Community” in Nazi Cinema

In the war film narratives that were upheld by the Nazi government, the characters embody the virtues of loyalty and sacrifice characteristic of uncompromising commitment to national community. Those who die in battle are “mourned as having died for their country. Death transfigures them, making them into heroes” (Reimer & Reimer, 1992, pp. 55). Films like Dawn (1933), which “emphasized the comradeship among the sailors and their willingness to sacrifice for others,” were praised by the Nazi government, with one National Socialist reviewer stating that the film “[glorified] ‘the German military in a modest and touching way,’” concluding the review by saying “‘No
one can escape its effect” (Reimer & Reimer, 1992, pp. 56). This was despite the film being an antiwar narrative. Other antiwar narratives, like *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), were condemned and even censored by the Nazi government for presenting the isolation of the German soldier on the battlefield (Reimer & Reimer, 1992). Even if the film was critical of military action, it would still be revered in Nazi Germany as long as it presented messages of solidarity and martyrdom in a positive light.

This ideal of solidarity would be imprinted in the youth of Germany through film and rhetoric. The belief by the Nazis was that the youth would solidify and pass down these ideas for the nation, becoming the foundation of the post-Weimar reconstruction (Appleby, 2013). In a 1933 speech, Hitler proclaimed, “When an opponent says, ‘I will not come over to your side,’ I calmly say, ‘Your child belongs to us already…you will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time, they will know nothing else but this new community” (Welch, 2004, pp. 233). The German youth, while not the sole target audience, were definitely among the primary targets. It was through propaganda in cinema, but also in television, newsreels, and class textbooks, that children were taught that they were fighting for the survival of the German nation and that the Fuhrer was their savior (Appleby, 2013; Herf, 2006; Welch, 1983).

The language of cinema of this time communicated a vision of martyrdom for the state on par with “the quality of a death cult” preparing the youth to die for the cause (Giesen, 2003, pp. 10). In the drama *S.A.—Mann Brand* (1933), Fritz Brand, a young German, professes his allegiance to National Socialism at the apprehensiveness of his family, his mother in particular. In a scene between the two, Fritz says, “[National Socialism is] not an ‘association,’ mother. It’s a movement—yes, a freedom movement.
Our fight concerns something very important—Germany’s freedom. A life doesn’t count for much when a whole nation is concerned” (Giesen, 2003, pp. 9). His mother expresses concern for his safety as such movements are under threat by communists. But upon Hitler’s becoming Chancellor of Germany, everyone, including Fritz’s communist father, “converts to the Nazi movement. Only Neuberg the Jew is forced to seek a train to Switzerland while the SA men wildly celebrate their victory” (Giesen, 2003, pp. 10). In *Hitlerboy Quex* (1933), the main character, Heini Volker, dies at the hands of communists. He is framed a martyr in the film, a boy who died “for the new idea of German national freedom” (Giesen, 2003, pp. 13). Days after the film’s premiere in Berlin, the entrance of Berlin’s largest cinema was packed with thousands of Hitler Youth in uniform (Giesen, 2003). Though the idea of the martyr is presented within a civilian context, the films serve to revere the idea of dying for the nation in any situation.

This frame of “national community” communicates a power structure connected to Connell & Messerschmidt’s (2005) masculine hierarchy, where those with the greatest control over economic and political capital (the state) construct a masculine ideal that subordinates those of opposing masculine (homosexuals) or gender (women) identities. This masculine ideal calls for military service as a defining moment for the conception of one’s manhood, where they would be forever immortalized if they were to die on the battlefield for the cause. The state’s control over individuals’ bodies and sexual behavior then allowed a theoretical army to be born, raised, and ready to die. This, along with Joseph Goebbels’s emphasis on the benefits of utilizing entertainment media (Reimer, 2000) leads to the following research questions:
RQ1a. How did propaganda films of Nazi Germany (fictional and nonfictional) construct a national community frame during WWII?

RQ1b. What is the interplay between the national community frame and hegemonic masculinity in the propaganda films?

Reconstituting Masculinity in Post-War Federal Republic of Germany

It was suggested that after the Second World War, the concept of the German man, and German men in general, were a problem for the nation (Fehrenbach, 1995; Fehrenbach, 1998; Whisnant, 2006). By the war’s conclusion, “nearly 4 million German men had been killed,” and “11.7 German soldiers were held in prison camps” (Fehrenbach, 1995, pp. 95). By 1950, five years after the war’s conclusion, “almost one-third of West German households were headed by divorced women or widows” (pp. 95). Much like during the Weimar Republic, established following successful campaigns for women’s suffrage in 1918, the Second World War and the post-war climate had seemingly masculinized German women (Fehrenbach, 1995; Whisnant, 2006). This was characterized by an “increase in displays of female social and sexual autonomy” (Fehrenbach, 1998, pp. 109), whose role was no longer restricted to that of wife and/or mother but also worker and socialite following the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

The absence of men in German households aided the perpetuation of stories which communicated that “in the wake of defeat and occupation, German men lost their status as protectors, providers, and even…as procreators” (Fehrenbach, 1998, pp. 109). Stories of men failing to protect their wives and children, some dying in vain, echoed throughout American-occupied Germany, with African American soldiers often
characterized as the perpetrators (Fehrenbach, 1998). In these tales of victimization, German women are depicted as maternal and pure rather than sexual, and the German man (or more precisely the German father) was seen as an “insubstantial image of ineffectuality” (pp. 111). These stories were framed as defeating for the man rather than degrading or violating for the woman. At times, the female victims would be criticized for “fraternizing with occupation soldiers,” with some individuals saying these women were “widely characterized as dishonoring the memory and marital sacrifices of German men, and desacralizing—and in some cases, literally denigrating—the German fatherland” (pp. 112) They were incorrectly assumed to be prostitutes or of low social rank, “motivated by materialism rather than love,” considered in direct opposition to “respectable German femininity” (pp. 115). Female decision-making was in direct opposition with the ideals that constituted hegemonic masculinity in the decades preceding the war.

Parallels between the ends of the First and Second World War “would not have been difficult to draw” (Fehrenbach, 1995, pp. 96), and stories that illustrated the masculinity crisis at the end of the war helped to perpetuate this. It was rare for German citizens to admit at least partial responsibility for the actions of the Nazi Party or even personal guilt over the war’s ramifications (Moeller, 1997). Even with this, responsibility was placed on the entirety of the now-divided German nation by international parties. While social policy continued to reflect patriarchal ideals of masculinity, emphasizing the role of the sexually active father bringing home a living wage for his family in order to facilitate a normative conception of family (Moeller, 1997), the results were aimed at
preventing the spread of the toxic hyper-masculinity that allowed for the rise of the Nazi Party.

Nazi Party members were marked as a “decadent modern perversion of an otherwise classical, enlightened German culture,” (McCormick, 2001, pp. 170) which had since become associated with a bourgeois culture they campaigned against during the time of the Weimar Republic. The German people had rejected this militarized conception of manhood that shaped masculinity in Nazi Germany as it was fading due to “military defeat and the rapid demilitarization of the country” (Whisnant, 2006, pp. 364). This cultural rejection was in some instances provoked by a fear of returning to this state of toxic hyper-masculinity, as discussions on the popularity in West Germany of the American Western film reveal that West German people expressed caution towards the overly aggressive men which populated the genre (Poiger, 1998). The film imports were most popular amongst the working-class youth of West Germany “who stood in opposition to the Hitler Youth,” with some groups referring to themselves as “Navajos,” identifying with American Natives (pp. 153). Such young male Germans no longer needed to “physically join any front(ier)s… instead, they could take care of their healthy desires in the realm of the movie theater and the psyche” (Poiger, 1998, pp. 158). By 1955, “Military service had lost its allure, and the martial ideal never again presented itself as either a viable or particularly attractive model for masculinity in postwar West Germany” (Fehrenbach, 1998, pp. 117). Cinema was used as a means to indulge in one’s desires in a healthy manner, and in the following decades, would be viewed as a tool for national reflection.
In the late 1950s, the German film industry and many government officials saw film as something that could transcend being solely recognized as an economic commodity (Davidson, 1999). Beginning during this period, “Cinema became the premiere cultural tool to achieve [political and cultural sovereignty], precisely because of its transclass, transgender, and transnational appeal” (Fehrenbach, 1995, pp. 3).

Government officials, including German Foreign Minister Heinrich von Bretano, saw the diplomatic potential of West German film texts through exhibitions abroad:

I am of the opinion that maintaining the vitality of the German film, independent of its economic status, is essential to our cultural-political work abroad. The FRG needs film as a broker of points of view and ideas from one people to another, as a national representative (Davidson, 1999, pp. 41)

West German artists, such as actor Bernhard Wicki, indicated similar political motivations. In his 1959 directorial debut, *The Bridge*, Wicki used non-actors and non-professional actors to depict the brutality of war and to dispel the Nazi-era message that valorized death on the battlefield as an act of heroism. Wicki says, “I wanted to show how one really died—not quickly and heroically, but suffering and screaming,” communicating that “any portrayal of heroism…is misplaced” (Reimer & Reimer, 1992, pp. 65). Because of their proximity to the fallen Nazi regime, war films during this time all but required the circumventing of historical reality to preserve the sympathetic connection between audience and the characters seen on screen (Reimer & Reimer, 1992). In *The Bridge*, Wicki “wanted to show how these boys, who were children like thousands of others, were led by false education to be capable of the world horrors” (Reimer & Reimer, 1992, pp. 66). War films like *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930)
and *Dawn* (1933), while critical of German involvement in the First World War, still valorized stereotypical heterosexual male behavior and at times success through national unity. *The Bridge* condemns these virtues; the director forges a more intense connection between the characters and the viewer by casting teenagers as soldiers (Reimer & Reimer, 1992), enlisted in the German army in the Second World War to die for a literal lost cause: protecting a bridge in their impoverished community that the German military have set to be destroyed in order to halt advancement of American forces.

**The Oberhausen Manifesto and Young German Cinema**

While *The Bridge* was representative of the country’s interest in using film as a tool of progressive cultural representation, Wicki’s debut, among other films of the time critical of Germany’s past, was considered an exception to what the population was interested in: American imports (Brockmann, 2010; Rentschler, 1984) Wicki and directors like him were outliers, but they were also precursors for the direction national cinema would take later one, one that would produce a uniquely German product. Regarding German cinema at this time, “What was lacking…was ‘the courage to think small,’ to face the everyday in all its grittiness, and to deal with the still uncomfortable past” (Rentschler, 1984, pp. 36). In 1962, a group of filmmakers and critics, disenfranchised from the cinema scene at the time, outlined their goals in creating a modern film culture and grievances with the current state of German cinema in the Oberhausen Manifesto. The signatories of the Oberhausen Manifesto rejected the economic attitudes and practices of German cinema at the time, one which reinforced genre myths of Hollywood and the identity of a film text as a commodity (Brockmann, 2010). The rise of the movement coincided with the political rise of the Social
Democratic Party after the fall of Konrad Adenauer’s administration in 1963 (Brockmann, 2010). Those associated with this movement desired to sever ties with the traditions of film production of the time (Rentschler, 1984) and provide an economically independent, nationally representative body of texts.

After the Second World War, the ideal for the fathers of Germany, Adolf Hitler, had fallen (Jerome, 2001, pp. 47), and parents were left “defeated and broken,” leaving the children with the options to identify with this or they revolt and take radical positions of opposition as victims” (pp. 48). The membership of what would become the Young German Cinema movement were a generation raised in the postwar years that turned against the “mystifications and repressions of its elders’ shadowy past” when they came of age (Rentschler, 1984, pp. 33). When they came of age, they viewed themselves of alien identity when comparing themselves to their families, particularly their fathers. Though the rebels of this movement showed no individual political or ideological outlook (Fehrenbach, 1995), they framed this “protest” as aesthetic, ideological, and, most importantly, generational (Fehrenbach, 1995, pp. 225; Moeller, 2001). Having viewed the German cinema scene as one which still reeked of “Nazi blood and soil” (Moeller, 2001, pp. 125), the filmmakers of the Young German Cinema movement approached the medium as a reconstruction effort for improving the social dialogue as they saw fit.

As generational factors were interwoven with the mission of the filmmakers of this time, the age of the filmmaker was equated with the ability to speak a “new language” of cinema (Brockmann, 2010, pp. 291). Though some filmmakers may not have self-identified as belonging to partisan identity of any sort, they were collectively against political conservatism and conformity (Brockmann, 2010). It was professed that
“The sons must first beget their fathers” (Fehrenbach, 1995, pp. 225) in order to construct a cinema of “sons and grandsons” (Brockmann, 2010, pp. 293). One of the figures at the forefront of the Young German Cinema movement, Alexander Kluge, introduced the idea of a counter-public sphere to German cinema and national discourse (Davidson, 1999). The counter public sphere, as Davidson (1999) explains, was “A space for the expression of different experiences...which would question the institutions of that government, the history of the ‘Germany’ it represented, and the capitalist mode of product and exchange” (pp. 38). An idea had been established and filmmakers followed through to initiate discourse on Germany’s past in an approachable manner.

**New German Cinema and Fluid and Complicit Masculinity**

As Bernhard Wicki and few of his contemporaries were viewed as outliers, wiling to return to an uncomfortable past, “the war and its consequences remained ‘part of an un-portrayed past.’” (Moeller, 2001, pp. 125). Volker Schlondorff’s 1966 adaptation of Robert Musil’s novella, “The Confusions of Young Torless”, illustrated issues of power and personal responsibility in pre-WWI boy’s academy which Schlondorff recontextualized to connect the 1906 original text to the repercussions of the Second World War (Schlondorff, 2005). As one of the earliest works of the period following the Young German Cinema movement, *Young Torless* “took a renowned literary text, assertively enacted it to strong cinematic effect, and dispassionately reflected on themes relevant to postwar West German culture: innocence and guilt, conformity and rebellion, solipsism and engagement” (Lellis & Moeller, 2002, pp. 25). In the torturing of the effeminate Basini over his committing theft, Torless, not wishing to participate nor intervene, simply chooses to observe (Schlondorff, 2005). Torless’s classmates and
Basini’s torturers, Beineberg and Reiting, exude a “merciless and power-hungry” urge to further Basini’s subordination to the extent that Basini is assaulted and humiliated by his entire class, though “Beineberg’s contempt for humanity and his manipulative drives are more mystic and exotic” than those of his partner, Reiting (Lellis & Moeller, 2002, pp. 26). Though he never demonstrates interventive action, Torless accepts responsibility for indirectly enabling the activities to take place and continue as far as they did, an apology that is met with voluntary expulsion on his part (Schlondorff, 2005). The power demonstrated by Beineberg is comparable to that of the Nazi leadership, instigating and encouraging aggressive action against impurity, which Schlondorff acknowledges in a 2004 interview with the Criterion Collection (Schlondorff, 2005).

Though not initiated in a direct fashion such as the Young German filmmakers with the Oberhausen Manifesto, New German Cinema was still “a decidedly national cinema, very much bound up in questions of identity and collective memory and concerned with the trauma of a still unassimilated past that persists as a continuing source of tension and disquiet” (Rentschler, 2015, pp. 213). New German filmmakers presented the personal implications of politics within the context of the daily lives of West German citizens (Brockmann, 2010), proclaiming that “The personal is the political” (pp. 296). The auteurs of this movement concentrated history within the context of the home and “fascism around the family table” (Murray & Wickham, 1992, pp. 281). Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s “Ali: Fear Eats the Soul” (1971) recalls the degradation against women for dishonoring the Fatherland when “fraternizing” with “colored” American occupation forces after the war (Fehrenbach, 1998, pp. 115) within the context of an older widow falling in love with a Moroccan immigrant (Watson, 1996). New German filmmakers like
Fassbinder all sought ways of figuring continuity and discontinuity “in terms of the relation between identity and otherness: the politics of identification” (Murray & Wickham, 1992, pp. 286). Social-Liberal government of the 1970s recognized that these innovative and critical films enhanced the prestige of West Germany’s international presence (Brockmann, 2010), with the filmmakers proclaiming in the Hamburg Declaration of 1979 that they viewed their audience as “allies” (pp. 299), as opposed to the “uneducated masses” as the target audiences in Nazi Germany propaganda. The New German Cinema marked a turn in how the filmmakers viewed their audience: a manner that ran counter to the contempt expressed by the government of Nazi Germany. Further emphasizing Alexander Kluge’s counter public sphere, filmmakers like Rainer Werner Fassbinder cast marginalized groups in a positive light, uncharacteristic of the Germany these filmmakers were attempting to disavow and move beyond.

After WWII, the stereotype of the corrupting homosexual was now seen as a foil for the Father (Whisnant, 2006). Now disassociated from the transvestite and more effeminate caricatures, which were thought to be more comedic than predatory, the corrupting homosexual is viewed as a threat to German youth, but by proxy it also threatens the German family (Whisnant, 2006). The stereotype was strong as ever in the late 1940s but would subside as the presence and representation of LGBT people expanded in Germany’s thriving cultural centers, like Hamburg and Berlin (Whisnant, 2006). Stigmas against homosexuals, and simultaneously hegemonic masculine ideals, were challenged through displays of androgyny and “gender confusion” amongst young, heterosexual Germans, which were invigorated by struggles for civil rights amongst homosexuals and African-Americans in the U.S. at this time (Mosse, 1996, pp. 188).
Fassbinder, one of the standout German filmmakers of the 1970s, “embodied the hope, irritation, and disenchantment of his generation” more than any of his contemporaries (Rentschler, 2015, pp. 188). He formulated strategies that “merged conventional and subversive elements, not forsaking a quest for alternative images—and still bearing a larger audience in mind” (Rentschler, 1984, pp. 47). Fassbinder utilized Hollywood melodrama, having “adopted” American filmmaker Douglas Sirk as his “father” (Murray & Wickham, 1992, p 287; Rentschler, 2015). This practice was common amongst German filmmakers of the NGC movement, who fostered a connection with American popular culture, reconfiguring it to serve their own needs (Rentschler, 1984).

Much like Schlondorff over a decade prior, Fassbinder recontextualized a classic work of German fiction, presenting it within a modern light. Fassbinder’s 1980 adaptation of Alfred Doblin’s Berlin Alexanderplatz “stands out as a film preoccupied with…vulnerability of the human body (Rentschler, 1986, pp. 306). Fassbinder suggests through main character Franz’s conflicts “the potential dangers of the middle-class desire for peace and order” (Watson, 1996, pp. 242), referring back to the masculinity crisis following both World Wars as well as the submission of the body to the state under the Nazi regime.

As demonstrated in the cultural shift as well as in the country’s cinematic movements from the 1960s to the 1980s, Germany, and its populous, saw it necessary to cast aside the masculine ideals of their fascistic past in favor of a less militaristic, exponentially inclusive and reflective identity. Now that the change has been established, how is it reflected in the cinematic works of this postwar period? This leads to the following research questions:
RQ2a. How is the frame of national community subverted in the post-WWII cinema of West Germany?

RQ2b. What do the post-WWII films exclude or include from Nazi-promoted national community frame?
Chapter 3: Methods

To answer the previously stated research questions, I conducted a framing analysis, as defined by Entmann, Matthes, & Pellicano (2009). This analysis focused on the framing of both fictional and nonfictional texts within Germany to either establish and reinforce the messages indicative of the national community frame or disavow them for political purposes. Based on how similar messaging is communicated in German texts before World War II, the national community frame, in theory, is capable of being manifested through them. It is then asked if this frame is present in the films which will be sampled and if the messages of this frame are countered, or even reinforced, in the post-war texts. This thesis will analyze each fictional film in both sections through framing theory by focusing on how the characters in the fictional narratives display characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Connell (1987) and expanded upon by Connell & Masserschmidt (2005), as related to the construction of national community, how the “performances” of the main characters are executed (Goffman, 1956, pp. 13), how their performances are affected by their respective “decorum” (pp. 67), and how these performances either replicate or betray hegemonic gender practices. Given that the post-WWII texts indicate greater realism through a more reflective tone, they could be potentially seen as texts that shift the location of the “region” from the “front” to the “backstage” (pp. 78). This idea means that the “dirty work,” referencing Goffman, is omitted from the texts produced in WWII and reemerge in the texts produced after the war. Examples of this include the lack of severe damage from the battlefield in The Great Love and Victory in the West that emerges in the graphic deaths featured in The Bridge.
In the nonfictional texts, the focus will be on the performance of the narration and the ideals espoused by the narrator, the people featured within the propaganda, and the performance of the propaganda filmmaker in the form of their usage of diegetic and nondiegetic sound and visual images. Diegetic sound originates from the film whereas nondiegetic sound is inserted by the filmmaker. It is through these performances that conventions of hegemonic masculinity are practiced, and the messages of national community are communicated.

Previous literature allows for the conceptualization of national community as a way of framing individual performance within fictional and nonfictional narrative texts before and during the war. Though this literature does not use the language of framing theory, the consistency of messages and images present in films during the period in which the Nazi Party controlled German parliament invites the usage of framing analysis when studying these works. The literature on the German culture and social policies under the Nazi Party has shown that such framing of individual performance has the capacity to solidify in the minds of the consumers of these film texts. However, gauging the success of the frame’s manifestation in German society is not the focus of this thesis, although the prospect of conducting research focusing on such causal determination in the future is definitely worth considering. Previous articles have been published about framing as applied to Nazi propaganda posters (McCloskey, 2012; Narayanaswami, 2011), but while a plethora of literature on Nazi and postwar cinema exists, the usage of terminology associated with framing theory in this literature is virtually nonexistent. While visual framing analysis has been applied to Nazi propaganda, it is only done so through a particular medium.
As stated in the literature review, national community is rooted in ideals of the family, conquests of the military, and obedience of the youth, considered the future of the German nation. But there is a single ideal that ties together these concepts: an uncompromising willingness to sacrifice for the good of the nation, even if it means the loss of one’s life. What sets this apart from the propaganda messages of other nations at the time is its architect, Joseph Goebbels, was prepared to deliver messages, commanding the subordinate nation to make a total commitment to the war (Baird, 1974; Welch, 1983). Such messaging entailed the possibility that every man, woman, and child would show willingness to become martyrs for the state (Giesen, 2003). It was not a matter of national unity but national subordination. Though the state may not have had a presence in the films produced, or those which will be discussed, the ideals of the nation are still communicated.

**Analysis of Nonfictional Texts**

Part one of this thesis will analyze Nazi propaganda films which utilize both nonfictional and dramatized (fictionally conceived) footage as the literature, and the architects of Nazi propaganda themselves, found the persuasive powers of both forms of the visual medium to be highly beneficial for the metastasizing of their messages. It is best to clarify that in the previous literature, the trends demonstrated in fictional and documentary propaganda works of Nazi film during World War II were firmly established beforehand, dating back to works released before Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany like “All Quiet on the Western Front” (Reimer & Reimer, 1992). With that being said, this portion of the thesis will focus on texts produced during the war.
For this section of the thesis, I will be focusing on the following propaganda texts.

The first of two nonfictional texts is *The March to the Fuhrer* [Der Marsch zum Fuhrer] (1940). The forty-five-minute short propaganda piece depicts the marching of Hitler youth (consisting predominantly of young men) to Nuremberg for the annual Nazi Party rally. The focus is maintained on the marchers throughout the runtime, with Party leadership only being featured in the film’s final minutes. Little to no scholarly attention given to this piece, and details about it on publicly accessible websites like Wikipedia and IMDb are scant.

The second is Svend Noldan’s *Victory in the West* [Sieg im Westen] (1941). The propaganda film details the conquests of Holland, Belgium, and France by the German forces in 1940. The newsreel was a medium which Goebbels himself found crucial to spreading the messages of national solidarity and victory during the early battles of the Second World War (Welch, 1983). Hilmar Hoffmann (1996) refers to a claim made by the journal “Der Deutsche Film” that states *Victory in the West* is “the greatest of all German newsreels” for its ability to capture the “breathtaking continuous illustrations” of the battles and soldiers where other mediums could not compare (pp. 220). Despite the film’s lengthy runtime of two hours, Hoffman and Welch continue to refer to it as a newsreel for its content and structure. The piece used nearly one million feet of film, extracting “an ideal-typical portrait of the warrior—the image of the German hero” (pp. 221). The hero is portrayed as invincible: the emotionally cold, yet fierce soldier with a “soft” face (pp. 221). The pieces were selected for their focus on the valor of sacrifice in battle, the idolizing of the German soldier as an almost perfect warrior, and the depiction
of the German youth, as the future of the German nation devoted to the philosophy of the Nazi Party, almost marking a success of strategies targeting education and life at home.

**Analysis of Fictional Texts**

For this section of the thesis, I will be focusing on the following fictional texts. The first of the two fiction pieces produced in Nazi Germany is Rolf Hansen’s *The Great Love* [*Die Grosse Liebe*] (1942). The romantic drama was considered the most commercially successful film of Nazi cinema (Brockmann, 2010). In Hansen’s work, a Luftwaffe officer named Paul falls in love with a singer named Hanna, a woman who is not yet drawn to the beliefs of Nazi Germany. The film illustrates the transformation of the love interest from “vamp to Madonna” by the Luftwaffe officer, with its romance being made possible “courtesy of the Luftwaffe” (Brockmann, 2010, pp. 176). Hanna’s job throughout most of the movie is learning “precisely what it means to be the lover and then the wife, of a Luftwaffe officer” (pp. 176). *The Great Love* bears similarities with German comedies of the time where the woman is made to conform to specific roles of lover, wife, or mother so as to either reclaim or reinforce the masculine identity of their male partner (Reimer, 2000). As Hanna progresses through the process of getting to know and love Paul, she is, most importantly, “coming to recognize and love what he stands for” (Brockmann, 2010, pp. 177). Returning to the idea that one’s body is not his but the state, in the film Paul is a conduit meant to spread the admiration of the Nazi Party’s ideology and practices like a virus.

The second is Veit Harlan’s *The Great Sacrifice* [*Opfergang*] (1944). The melodrama portrays a love triangle where world traveler Albrecht engages in an affair with Alskling, his neighbor, though he is married to Octavia. Within this narrative, the
film trains the German audience to “maintain the sanctity of marriage and instrumentalize sexuality in service of the state” (O’Brien, 2004, pp. 169). In the film’s conclusion, Alskling, suffering from typhoid, passes away and the film celebrates the reunification of Albrecht and Octavia as their marriage is deemed safe. Mary-Elizabeth O’Brien (2004) further states that the film “engages in a discourse about masculinity centered on territorial domination and about femininity that rewards sacrifice, self-effacement, and service while punishing mobility, self-interest, and passion with death” (pp. 169). Though it is not explicitly stated, the principles expressed in this film are representative of the subordination of the non-masculine individual characteristic of the basic ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This film also emphasizes the loss of the autonomous individual as sexual desires the state preaches against are punished and those who abide by the state’s social policies are rewarded for their sacrifice.

Part two of this thesis will focus on the fictional film texts that were produced during the postwar era of West German cinema, the latest example being released in 1980. Referring back to the literature, the West German government saw the works of the nation’s artists as a cultural tool that could be utilized to reestablish diplomatic bonds with other Western nations, the United States in particular (Davidson, 1999; Brockmann, 2010). These three films have been selected from the postwar period of German cinema to demonstrate that the subversion of the “national community” frame and its messages was communicated in the films of this vast period. Each film was produced during different periods and/or movements of German cinema. The films which will be discussed in this section of the thesis will be Bernhard Wicki’s *The Bridge*, Volker
Schlondorff’s *Young Torless*, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

The previous literature has demonstrated that the messages of each film generally contrast with those of the “national community” frame established in the films of Nazi Germany. This section of the thesis looks into how each film counters these messages, utilizing the hierarchy and different types of masculinity mentioned in the literature review, primarily in how the characters in these films reinforce or differ from these types.

** Coding **

As stated earlier in this section, all of the sample texts will be analyzed based on Goffman’s concepts of performance and decorum and how such performances are framed to be symbolic of this concept of national community rooted in hegemonic ideals of masculinity. Performance refers to all of the activity the performer participates in for an observing audience, who are influenced by the performance (1956). I intend on focusing on each film text as the unit of analysis, rather than selecting particular, individual shots and scenes, thus incorporating each text’s narrative into the performance analysis. Using Goffman’s original concepts of the performer and decorum (front and backstage setting), each film text will be subject to questions regarding the performance presented on screen by the performers of the fictional and nonfictional works:

1. Who is/are the performer(s)?
2. What hegemonic ideals are communicated in their performance?
3. How do the performers respond to any non-hegemonic portrayals of masculinity?
4. What are the positive outcomes of the performance?

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1 See Appendix for table
5. What are the negative consequences of the performance?
6. Do the performers benefit from their performance?
7. How is the theme of sacrifice made present in the narrative?

The performances will be compared to the various categories of hegemonic masculinity listed in the literature review: warrior, complicit, and hyper.

Demonstrations of homoeroticism and homosociality will also be considered in the various performances.

Following the initial coding process, the compiled data will be analyzed to answer the following questions:

1. How does the narrative display interactions between the performer and women?
2. How does the narrative display interactions between the performer and other men?
3. What is the relationship, if one exists, between the masculine ideals of the individual performer and the state?
4. What is the relationship between replicating hegemonic masculine ideals through performance and sacrifice?
5. How do performances in the front setting differ from actions within a backstage setting?
6. What actions of the performer are omitted from the propaganda pieces that are present in the postwar narratives?
7. What actions or events outside of the performer are omitted from the propaganda pieces that are present in the postwar narratives?
8. How do these omitted actions affect the outcome of the performance?

Matters of decorum, or how the performer orients themselves while in observance of the audience (1956), will be of greater focus when discussing the post-WWII film texts. In these films, the messages of the propaganda of Nazi Germany are called into question or rejected in favor of new, more critical ones. This thesis poses that the newer messages are more indicative of Goffman’s more realistic, backstage behavior, presenting the consequences of the performance of the front of Nazi Germany. This backstage behavior consists of “reciprocal first-naming, co-operative decision-making, profanity, open sexual remarks, elaborate griping, smoking, rough informal dress…use of dialect or sub-standard speech, mumbling and shouting, playful aggressivity…inconsiderateness for the other in minor but potentially symbolic acts…” (1956, pp. 78). The intentions of the filmmakers must also be considered, as their individual texts, fictional and nonfictional, can be evaluated as performances in themselves. This will be done through the gathering of interviews, personal writings, and other secondary materials either of or about the filmmakers.
Chapter 4: Findings

Hegemony and National Community

Through framing analysis, the individual performances of the main characters of each film were isolated to address how they collectively acted to construct and build upon a frame of national community. The first part of the initial research question asked, “How did propaganda films of Nazi Germany construct a national community frame during WWII?” The research found that national community was defined by an acknowledgment of authority in both domestic and public settings. The texts present an intersection of power in the form of hierarchy, as the authority granted to the head of the household is still limited compared to that of the state. One’s identity is also defined by their involvement in the war effort, with enlistment yielding greater social benefits compared to civilians. The messaging of propaganda texts focusing on the war effort go so far as to claim that the men who sacrifice themselves for their country are granted both valor and manhood in the eyes of the German leadership.

Unity and loyalty to the state

In the earliest text sampled, 1940’s March to the Fuhrer, thousands of Hitler Youth take part in this annual journey to what is claimed to be the birthplace of Nazi Party ideology. By taking part in the march, The Hitler Youth crowd together in both Munich and Branau to show their support to the leader of their country and their ideology. By following in line with his teachings, they are allowed to be in the presence of Adolf Hitler. The experience becomes a tool to encourage future participation from youth that have not yet been indoctrinated. Near the film’s conclusion, the Marchers congregate with several thousand Hitler Youth in Munich, where Adolf Hitler addresses
them in the town’s center. Hitler emphasizes the importance of the “unity of the German folk” during this speech, whom he describes as “a folk of iron” (The March to the Fuhrer, 1940). He is thus conveying that one can only find strength in unity with the state, or rather, Hitler’s vision of the state. At the speech given at the prison in Branau, Hitler’s book, *Mein Kampf*, is described to those in attendance as the book that “shall give you the strength to carry on the struggle, the struggle of the German folk, the struggle of the new generation, the struggle for the future of Germany” (The March to the Fuhrer, 1940).

Adolf Hitler’s time in the Branau prison serves as the backbone for this struggle, for what began under a man framed as a patriot of the one true Germany is now something to be replicated by these youth on the battlefield.

**Subservience to a higher authority**

The films sampled demonstrated a reinforcement of domestic hierarchy that was influenced and superseded by the power of the governing body. In *March to the Fuhrer*, Hitler’s image serves as the inspiration for what is deemed the “new German.” This “new German” is conflated with an idea of a “true German,” one which would carry out the orders of the Fuhrer without question. This is emphasized following Hitler’s speech, as those in attendance pledge the following: “I swear to God this sacred oath: To be faithful and obedient to our Fuhrer Adolf Hitler, to be at the service of the party and our folk, and conscientiously perform my duties, so help me God” (The March to the Fuhrer, 1940). This establishes a hierarchy, beginning with faithful obedience to Hitler, followed by being at the service of the Nazi party, and concluding with the German citizens. Emphasis is placed on the promise of obedience towards the party leadership, allowing the party as a whole to embody this authority by proxy. Then, by swearing to
“conscientiously” perform their duties, the Hitler Youth in attendance affirm that their position and the orders placed on them are right and just. The youth never question what these duties as citizens of this new Germany may entail.

Through its narration, *Victory in the West* reinforces this subservience through its characterization of the German military and Nazi party leadership. At one point, the narrator declares that Hitler alone “knows the hour in which the great decision will fall” (Noldan, 1941). This is in reference to the call for invading Poland, which is presented as a hotbed of terrorist activity that poses a threat to the sovereignty of the German state. The way this statement is communicated plays into the glorification of Hitler and his position as Germany’s leader. When condensed down to its bare meaning, it is a fairly standard power for most leaders in the Western world. What is most concerning about this power is the narrator’s following statement: “He also knows however that this nation at arms stands behind him in true love and is ready to set out on his order when the decision comes” (Noldan, 1941). The narration does not state that the nation is merely confident in the capabilities of its leadership, but rather that their devotion to Hitler and the party is equated to “true love.”

This idea of standing behind the Fuhrer in “true love” fuels a spirit of sacrifice. The willingness for these soldiers to put their lives at risk serves the wishes of their revered leader, not for a cause of immediate consequence. There is no party or nation driving the will of these soldiers; only “his idea” (Noldan, 1941). Adolf Hitler is portrayed as the leader who harnessed the fire of German dissatisfaction in a time of post-war “decay” (Noldan, 1941). He carried this “torch” as a small following for the National Socialist Workers Party “grew to become a powerful political army” (Noldan, 1941). He
is not simply the face of the movement and by extension the nation, rather he is the movement. As Commander and Chief of the German Armed Forces, he acts as the most salient representation of military leadership, imbuing the same determination that led him to becoming Chancellor to the soldiers that follow him.

The fictional texts serve to highlight the presence of this hierarchy in the domestic setting. Within the lives of Albrecht, Octavia and Als, the characters of 1944’s The Great Sacrifice, two men serve to intervene in each of their lives. They do this for the purposes of maintaining a commitment to monogamy but also to shape them into adequate performers of gender ideals. The first is Matthias, Octavia’s uncle who engages with both his niece and Albrecht directly to manage their relationship and to prevent the relationship from disintegrating. He has never approved of Albrecht’s relationship habits, as Albrecht has involved himself with multiple women and is apprehensive towards the idea of settling down. It is partially through Matthias’s coaxing that Albrecht warms to the idea of marrying Octavia, but Matthias grows outraged when Albrecht becomes infatuated with Als. He demands that Albrecht and Als separate from each other emotionally, and for Albrecht to focus his attention and affection on Octavia. He says to Albrecht, “You couldn't possibly hold one woman in your arms and claim to love the other," saying it is the practice of a "savage" who lacks "respect for oneself" (Harlan, 1944). In his interactions with Octavia, he reassures her that there is something special between her and Albrecht that Als nor any other woman could replicate. Outraged over how other men view Als as an object of desire, she says, “Look at this! The way men look after her, nobody ever looks after me on the street, even though everyone tells me I'm beautiful...Albrecht has told me. What's the secret?” (Harlan, 1944). Hoping to ease
her anxiety, Matthias comforts her, saying “Octavia, you should be lucky nobody looks after you on the street like that; you're such a pure person” (Harlan, 1944). Matthias is able to compel Albrecht to end his relationship with Als for Octavia’s sake, expressing profound regret over his relationship with Als while admitting that it brought him an incomparable sense of joy.

The second of the two men is Als’s physician, Terboven, voices his disapproval of Als’s ambition and desire to partake in more masculine physical activities like swimming and horseback riding. His motives, however, are rooted in his concern for her health, as she is dying from a debilitating disease. Terboven believes that the physical activities that capture Albrecht’s attention cause her to overexert herself, negatively affects her overall wellbeing. While not framing the issue as a problem caused by or related to Albrecht, Terboven insists that Als’s athletic activities with him cease. She is too weak, in his professional opinion, to participate in such physically demanding activities. When she even suggests that she might buy a pony for her young daughter, Terboven vehemently objects, believing that it would place the child in similar danger. Als voices her personal motivation for wanting to do all of this and more, saying “I want to live. I don't want to linger. I don't want to think all the time whether I may do this or not. I'd rather live a shorter time. What does it matter if one dies at 25 or 26? But I want to get something out of those 25 years” (Harlan, 1944). The two men serve to guide these characters in a direction fitting the nation’s ideals of gender performance. For the individual who chose not to abide by the wishes of man watching over her, she may have lived a satisfying life, but a very brief one, nonetheless.

Deriving strength from the military
The propaganda texts present military enlistment in a favorable light both on the battlefield and in civilian life. In Victory in the West, the performance on the part of the newsreel’s narrator reinforces a belief that individual and national strength is derived from that of the nation’s military. While footage is shot of the German soldiers in trenches, the narrator says, “Here also, the spirit of sacrifice of the individual fighters of the young National Socialist German military, inspired by the Fuhrer and his idea, wins out over scientifically engineered machinery and material” (Noldan, 1941). When deconstructing this statement from the narrator, it communicates a multitude of narratives that are present throughout the film and similar propaganda pieces during this time. First, the narrator highlights the “spirit of sacrifice” of these soldiers, whose sacrifices are shown to be rewarded earlier in the film as survivors of the military campaign received the Iron Cross for their service. These men advance for the cause of the nation “without regard for enemy fire” (Noldan, 1941), almost as if to say their determination to succeed has made them impervious to the attacks from their enemies. In the narrator’s final claim that the German military “wins out over scientifically engineered machinery and material” (Noldan, 1941), an emphasis is placed on both the cold, artificial nature of enemy strategies and the organic nature and physical superiority of German soldiers. German forces are portrayed as lively and empathetic, taking pride in their victories as smiles are plastered throughout while also paying respect for their fallen comrades. The effects of the engineered machinery are near nonexistent, as the film rarely communicates loss of life visually, relying on brief narration as a reminder of what could happen. But there is never a lone soldier, as strength is derived from unity. At the film’s conclusion a banner of the German swastika fades into a shot of a field of soldiers, illustrating the
significance of unity and military service for the Third Reich and for the Nazi ideology. But contrary to the narration communicating how the soldiers are risking their lives, the minimizing of casualty footage from the battlefield to a mere twenty seconds frames the spirit of sacrifice as one based on the sacrifice of one’s immediate safety.

Upon returning home, those fighting for Germany are revered for their bravery. In 1942’s *The Great Love*, Paul’s status as a pilot in the air force plays a significant role in how he is perceived by others and how he shapes perception of the German ideal. Hanna expresses her love for Paul only after finding out that he is a fighter pilot. Prior to this, Paul’s feelings for her were purely one-sided. Hanna’s disinterest and disdain for Paul changes when she feels that Paul had abandoned her.

**Masculinity and National Community**

The second part of the initial research question asked, “What is the interplay between the national community frame and hegemonic masculinity in the propaganda films?” The research found that masculine hegemony within the frame of national community was illustrated by what the men could do for their country, with personal relationships being heavily regulated within the fictional narratives. In these narratives, the ideal man is one who is strong, confident, and willing to give up his life for the Third Reich. The women are meant to appease the desires of the men rather than their own. At times, the desires of the women are solely to fulfill those of the men. These women benefit tremendously compared to their counterparts who are invested in their own desires. The domestic hierarchy established in the previous section carries over, with the men being afforded greater agency over the women, regardless of age.

**Abiding by traditional gender roles**
The divide between male and female responsibilities in Germany is communicated early on in March to the Fuhrer. During the film, the Hitler youth marching towards Braunau utter numerous chants as children gaze and follow. Examples of these include one at marker 15:52 that proclaims, “Brother, I am going to die for the Fatherland…My darling girl, you don't get to come along” (The March to the Fuhrer, 1940). Before they are set to join the battlefield, or even enlist in the German army, they are already booming that they will give up their own lives for the state; proclaiming that it is a man’s honor to die on the battlefield. The narration at marker 21:04 indicates that the banners raised at the Konigsplatz in Munchen are not to simply honor the dead, but rather they are to honor the first “martyrs of the movement” (The March to the Fuhrer, 1940). This further implies that the ideological cause of the Nazis takes precedent over the country. In his speech in Nuremberg, Adolf Hitler equates the youth fighting and dying in the war for Germany to them “[shaping] their grand destiny” and “[becoming] something greater,” and that these youth must confront the challenges ahead “for past generations” (The March to the Fuhrer, 1940). The idea of becoming a man on the battlefield is now tied to both overcoming the failures of the past and potentially dying for the sake of the movement.

The presence of sacrifice is seen throughout the texts in the contexts of war and domestic life. At the end of The Great Love, Paul and Hanna are happily wed, and Hanna’s life is now in order with her husband. But given Hanna’s previous disdain for Paul, is Hanna experiencing true happiness? While discussing his infatuation towards Hanna with one of his comrades early on, Paul mentions that he withheld knowledge of his status in the air force from Hanna, saying, “I didn’t want to tell her I would be leaving
the next morning,” adding “[I] can’t stand it, when women cry” (Hansen, 1942). Paul is oblivious to Hanna’s repulsion towards him, viewing her as emotionally vulnerable as any other woman. Through her marriage to Paul, Hanna has given up an independent lifestyle which seems to bring her dissatisfaction and loneliness, given her music which features lyrics such as “My motto is if it pleases, it is allowed” (Hansen, 1942). She gives in to the will of a somewhat overbearing, stalker-like pilot who appears to admire her for the sake of her physical appearance, but never mentions her singing and sees her filling the role of a housewife rather than considering a future in music. Hanna’s dissatisfaction is communicated almost purely through her stage performance. Her interest in a relationship emerges only after Paul reemerges in her life and fully reveals himself to her as a pilot in the German Air Force. It communicates a message that happiness for German women comes when they serve their purpose in the right man’s life.

Hanna, having at this point accepted and reciprocated Paul’s feelings for her to the point that they are now engaged, enjoys his company prior to his return to the air force. His fellow soldiers make light of the proposal and frame the engagement and overall relationship as Hanna’s request and decision. Similar to how Paul presented Hanna, and women in general, as more likely to communicate emotional affect, she is once again presented as the one showing emotional attachment, while also implying that marriage stifles virile men like Paul as he is “stuck” with her (Hansen, 1942).

The statement made by Paul’s fellow pilots communicates that a commitment to monogamy is more important for the woman than the man. The Great Sacrifice carries this message over to the relationship Albrecht has with Octavia and Als. Though the film’s narrative does not directly state that it was because of Als’s desire to engage in
male-oriented physical activities that her life ended prematurely, the otherwise passive Octavia ultimately benefits from her performance whereas Als does not. The conceptual makeup of Octavia’s character is based primarily on her relationship with Albrecht. The “purity” that Matthias references when consoling her is in relation to her desire to have a relationship with Albrecht and neither show nor receive affection for any other man. This essence of purity is meant as a critique of Als, not Albrecht. Though Matthias calls Albrecht’s desire to love more than one woman the act of a “savage,” the narrative frames the conflict not as Albrecht being adulterous but as Als stifling the relationship of the main performers.

Als dies as a result of her illness, the severity of which is exacerbated by her attempts to woo Albrecht. She loves him though she does not wish to take him away from Octavia.

As she dies, Als believes she is speaking with Albrecht, who tells her that he loves Octavia and that marriage is the "great sacrifice": “Before Octavia's love, everything else must be extinguished and pass away…Forgive me, Als” (Harlan, 1944). There appears to be a rescinding of agency by Albrecht in this statement, as if he is saying that it is not his choice to remain with Octavia but that of someone or something of greater authority. The same could be argued for Als, who in a letter to Albrecht says, “I mustn't take you away from Octavia. I know how much happiness I would take away from her” (Harlan, 1944). The concern for fidelity seems to outweigh the concern for the happiness of these characters. Referring to the marriage as the titular “great sacrifice” transforms the institution of marriage into an almost contractual obligation of citizenship. Octavia
belongs with Albrecht because of her passive performance, saying to Albrecht, “Wherever you go to be happy, my love will always accompany you” (Harlan, 1944).

In the original script for the narrative, Albrecht was meant to be the one to die, not Als. The change was made at the behest of propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, who wanted the film to emphasize traditional relationship dynamics and to distance oneself from the prospect of adulterous acts while families were separated during the war (Romani, 2001). Goebbels’s intervention solidifies the framing of Als as representing the obstacle of infidelity that Albrecht must overcome for Octavia’s sake.

**Responding to non-hegemonic masculine performance**

Throughout the texts, the masculine hegemony connoted through the performances of the main characters is reinforced through challenges from non-hegemonic messaging and performance. The narration of *Victory in the West* posits Hitler as the leader that brought Germany out of a state of postwar decay. The film attributes this period to the negotiations that ended World War I, which was viewed as emasculating to the nation. The narrator refers to the “shameful” Treaty of Versailles, the agreement that ended the war, as the “rape of Germany” (Noldan, 1941). He then refers to Germany’s invading of surrounding land as “breaking the chains of Versailles” and “reclaiming what is German” (Noldan, 1941). This conflict is framed as a reconstitution of manhood that was supposedly robbed from Germany by the rest of Europe. The invasion of Poland, in particular, is described as a liberation effort for German nationals who had been taken captive by Polish terrorists. This cause thus legitimizes subsequent retaliation efforts in the eyes of the public, who will be trained to view Poland and similar adversarial nations as enemies of the German state. Similar to how the Nazi Party
presented party membership and enlistment in the German armed forces as a reclaiming of masculinity for WWI veterans and prisoners of war, the conquest of Western Europe is thus framed as Germany’s return as a dominant and masculine nation.

The narrator also gives attention to the age and presentation of the soldiers of the German army. As the literature has previously noted, one of the prime targets in propaganda messaging by the German government were children. Though this was not as if to say that children should immediately enlist or that their services would be conscripted, it was still a valuable tool for education and recruitment. By giving representation in propaganda to a specific age group, it was as if to say that you too could earn the admiration of your country, but more significantly, your leader. In their time off of the battlefield, soldiers were shown messing around, playing games, and teasing the other, visibly younger soldiers as they bathe, wash their uniforms, and tend to their equipment. The narration communicates messages of uniqueness and relatability simultaneously, saying that any male of a certain age can prove their manhood on the battlefield. War was framed as a coming-of-age experience, with the attention given to the age and behavior of the soldiers serving to reinforce this idea.

In *March to the Fuhrer*, The Hitler Youth visiting with families are able to convince younger children to consider joining them in future marches. The Youth pose the march as a steppingstone towards achieving manhood in the eyes of the state. While the family’s youngest son is eager to join in the effort, his mother and older sister express concern for his safety, which is hastily disregarded by the male marchers staying with them. The marchers sternly tell the family, “It’s a privilege for the youth to participate in the Adolf Hitler march” (*The March to the Fuhrer*, 1940). As stated earlier, part of the
mission of the march is to encourage future participation from younger children so they too can later become Hitler Youth.

In The Great Love, Paul’s conspicuous absence generated feelings of concern, feelings that germinated when in the presence of her pianist, Alexander. Alexander at first feels sympathetic to Hanna, but later he reveals that his ultimate goal is that Hanna would love him. When his advances are rejected in favor of the absent pilot, Alexander explodes saying, “You tell yourself you love him because your vanity has been hurt” (Hansen, 1942). There lies a striking contrast between Paul and Alexander in physical stature and occupation. Alexander is the more effeminate of the two and considers his work art rather than simple entertainment. His hubris lies in his adoration for his singer. Like Paul, Alexander’s feelings for Hanna are unrequited, but they differ in how they face rejection. Paul sees this as a challenge for him to overcome as a man, his goal being to take Hanna and claim her as his, no longer independent. Alexander responds to Hanna’s rejection by claiming that Hanna does not understand what she wants; he believes she wants him but doesn’t know it. After a failed request to have dinner together, Alexander says, “It is not easy to be friends with a woman; one easily becomes a tragic figure…or perhaps worse…a comic event” (Hansen, 1942). Later during rehearsal, as Hanna departs to see Paul, Alexander shouts, “That’s it? Simply walks out on us, the bitch!” (Hansen, 1942) The melodramatic self-pity contrasts strikingly with Paul’s beliefs on displaying emotional affect; it is not becoming of a man to be so emotional. In this contest, the selfless soldier understands what a woman desires, not the selfish artist. In the film, Hanna’s happiness is defined for her by the men around her, with Paul ultimately winning out.


**Outcomes of Hegemonic Performance**

The outcomes of the individual performances in the propaganda texts are overwhelmingly positive. *March to the Fuhrer* sees the Hitler Youth expressing a feeling of exceptionalism as they were in the presence of their deified leader. The children were able to travel with their comrades to the birthplace of His Struggle. More significant is the role that the performers play in the recruitment of other German youth into the party. Through this narrative, the Hitler Youth are not only rewarded for their commitment to the Reich, but they also act as recruiters for younger German children who are shown to be interested in what party enlistment can do for them, even against the wishes of their family. The children are shown how the older Hitler Youth have benefited from their experiences in the party and how such experiences have both shaped and fulfilled their ideas of manhood.

This idea of fulfillment is seemingly realized near the end of *Victory in the West*. Germany declares victory in their campaign against French forces and have successfully occupied enemy territory in what the narrator proclaims to be the “greatest battle in world history” (Noldan, 1941). The service of the armed German forces is rewarded through the presenting of the Iron Cross for those who survived and praise from the film’s narration: “For this successful outcome...we should thank, above all, the German soldier. Wherever he was sent, he distinguished himself in the worthiest manner” (Noldan, 1941). The soldiers involved in the conflict benefited from the performance scripted by the film’s narrator as they were able to successfully capture enemy territory and return home alive.

As Paul returns from service in *The Great Love*, the couple are happily wed and Hanna’s life is now in order with her husband. As the couple celebrates their marriage,
they look up to fighter jets passing by, implying that a bright future lies ahead for both
the couple and the Fatherland. The performers of *The Great Sacrifice* ultimately abide by
the standards put forth by Matthias, having acted as a source of greater authority within
the narrative and symbolizing the German state reinforcing highly conservative social
policies. While Als met an untimely fate, Octavia was able to fulfill a final request for
Als, at Albrecht’s behest. And while Albrecht acknowledges both in reality and in Als’s
dream that, for Octavia’s sake, he cannot be with her, this strengthens the bond that
Albrecht and Octavia share.

**Deconstructing National Community**

The first part of the second research question asked, “How is the frame of national
community subverted in the post-WWII cinema of West Germany?” The research found
that the sampled texts of the postwar period followed a method of performance similar to
the hegemonic performance of the propaganda texts. The major difference between the
performances of these two sampled groups was the outcome. None of the performers of
the postwar texts benefited from abiding by a hegemonic performance model, with two of
the texts demonstrating a performance shift. While the performances of the postwar texts
were rooted in similar concepts of subservience to a higher authority, loyalty to the state,
abiding by traditional gender roles, and deriving strength from the military, a
commitment to a sense of order was also observed. This was demonstrated by how the
decision-making practices of the performers were shaped by self-defined concepts of
order and/or stability.

**Subservience to a higher authority**
In *The Bridge*, the film firmly establishes the boys’ devotion towards a higher (masculine) authority, and this is illustrated in the manner of loyalty Jurgen has for his late father. When discussing his friend Walter with his mother, he says of him, “He’s a great guy, but he’s a sad case too…He doesn’t believe in anything anymore” (Wicki, 2015). When his mother asks what he believes in, Jurgen responds, “Everything Dad told me” (Wicki, 2015). Jurgen’s father was a high-ranking officer in the German military who was killed in action. The identity of Mr. Borchert as Jurgen’s father is conjoined to his status as a military officer. The sole visual reference given of Jurgen’s father is a portrait of him in his officer uniform. The main artifacts passed down from him to his son include a knife and a military authorized pistol, both of which Jurgen carries with him in training and in battle. Jurgen’s mother claims that “The Borcherts have always been officers” (Wicki, 2015); this statement serves as the reason for sending her child to serve in the war effort.

Schlondorff’s 1966 film, *Young Torless*, takes place at the dawn of the 20th century, but the director recontextualizes the pre-WWI narrative to act as a metaphor for the rise to power of the Nazis. The main performer, Thomas Torless, is “not on either side” of the conflict between Beineberg and Basini, as Schlondorff states in a 2004 interview (Schlondorff, 2005). Reflecting on the narrative’s messaging, Schlondorff says, “It reminds us, somehow, of the question that is haunting us all the time, and still is today, ‘How could Nazis ever come to power and to last for so long?’” (Schlondorff, 2005). While Torless does not choose to intervene in the conflict between his two classmates, he nonetheless chooses to observe as Beineberg and fellow classmate Reiting torture Basini for the crime of theft.
Torless initially believes that by not intervening, he is giving Basini the chance to defend himself, but he is instead enabling Beineberg’s disproportionate response to Basini’s misdeeds.

Like Torless, Franz Biberkopf of Berlin Alexanderplatz finds a figure of greater authority outside of the realms of politics or military. Instead, after he ends his relationship with his girlfriend Lina, Franz meets Reinhold, an ex-con, at a pub. Feeling sympathy for Reinhold’s depressed expression, he soon becomes a means for Reinhold to end relationships he has with other women. Franz becomes a replacement for Reinhold, which he protests, telling Reinhold to simply “get rid of her” (Fassbinder, 2007). Reinhold responds, “That’s what’s so difficult! Women don’t get the message, not even if it’s in writing…I’ve said it a hundred times…I have to keep her…until I’ve kicked the bucket or something” (Fassbinder, 2007). Through this statement, Reinhold establishes himself as a misogynist by projecting an anecdotal instance to an entire gender. Franz sympathetically says, “Hold on, it's none of my business. You're such a sharp young guy, planning to blow up the gasworks and all that. But in a situation like this, you sit here singing the blues. I don't understand you" (Fassbinder, 2007). All of this leads to Reinhold saying bluntly, "Take her off my hands” (Fassbinder, 2007). Franz develops feelings for Franze after inviting her over to his home while searching for Reinhold, who Franze believes disappeared. They then forge a relationship together, but Reinhold becomes outraged that Franz hesitates to give Franze the boot. What Franz did for Reinhold was not a favor; it was an order. Now his personal and sexual relationships are regulated by Reinhold, with each woman sent to Franz being viewed solely as a possession and with Franz serving the role of a means of disposal.
When attempting to reason with Reinhold that there must be a better way of handling his relationships, suggesting that he would “find a place” for the women Reinhold abandons, Reinhold retorts, “Steer clear of them” (Fassbinder, 2007). Reinhold’s role in Franz’s life is one of authoritative leadership, taking command of his decision-making and personal life and assigning him the role of managing subordinates he no longer has use for. Franz may not see who he wishes and though he views himself as a friend of Reinhold who can console and advise him, any advice given fails to register for Reinhold.

**Deriving strength from military**

As stressed in the section focusing on the role of the military in Nazi propaganda, enlistment and service were seen as passages to attaining manhood in the German state. In *The Bridge*, Sigi’s mother’s opposition to his enlistment is a regular point of contention between the two. In interactions when the war is brought up, Sigi’s mother regularly references her relatives who will keep Sigi at a safe distance from the conflict. Sigi consistently objects to his mother’s pleas to avoid enlisting. While pointing out that he feels that he will be judged less as a man, he also references his friends and classmates: “You mean run away? What will the others say?” “‘Run away?’ You’re not a soldier” (Wicki, 2015). Sigi, the smallest and youngest of the main performers, is judged by his peers as less of a man compared to themselves, attached to it the stigma that there are those not considered “man enough” to serve in the German armed forces.

The interactions between Sigi and his mother demonstrate the power this message has on the youngest of German society during this period but also the expectations of masculine performance at this time.
Karl believes his father's assistant was toying with him emotionally, using the shame of humiliation at a moment of vulnerability as reason for enlisting. His father tells him, “It shouldn't be that bad at this point. You'll have months of basic training, and by then…” (Wicki, 2015). Barbara, his assistant, objects, saying “He’s just a child…They belong in kindergarten, not in barracks!” (Wicki, 2015). The belittlement leads to Karl running away but attempting to escape this leads to only further judgment by German soldiers. Their commanding officer, being threatened to abandon his post and soldiers by his fellow officers tells them, “They're just kids! They've been soldiers for one day…Send kids to war and then abandon them! Are you out of your mind?” (Wicki, 2015). As a truck of wounded soldiers pass the boys, one of the soldiers tells Sigi, “Sonny, have some chocolate before they put you in a box yourself” (Wicki, 2015). After defending the bridge where they were stationed, the last surviving performers, Hans and Albert, approach a bomb detonation squad, who inform them that the sacrifices of their friends were pointless as the bridge was set to be blown up to prevent American forces from penetrating the parameter. They call the survivors “kids” and tell them “go home” (Wicki, 2015).

Sigi’s primary motivation for serving in the German armed forces involves proving himself as a man. Hearing a possible enemy aircraft flying overhead, Sigi drops to the ground to avoid being shot. The boys react to presumed cowardice with mockery: “Just going to lie there till victory?” "Did you wet your pants?” "What would mommy say if she saw you down there?” (Wicki, 2015). Sigi is later killed by an actual enemy aircraft in an attempt to redeem himself through an act of bravery. Their fellow soldiers refuse to recognize the sacrifices that were made by the performers even as one, Albert, is left
standing. Everyone else, Sigi, Jurgen, Walter, Karl, Klaus, and Hans, were all killed. Albert has survived, but in an attempt to defend his now-deceased friend Hans, he kills a soldier from the bomb detonation squad. All but one of the children die on the battlefield and Albert is left physically and psychologically scarred by the experience.

**Loyalty to the state**

The willingness for these children to give their lives in this war symbolizes the loyalty they hold for the German nation. Early on, Walter's father sends his wife away to run off with his mistress under the guise of an important meeting amongst Party officials. Here, Walter’s father represents the Party leadership abandoning its supposed “iron folk” when they are most in need. As Walter catches on to what his father’s true intentions are, he uses the opportunity presented with conscription as a way to become a better man than his father. His father retorts, “Just you wait. They’ll give you hell tomorrow. They’ll kick your sorry ass. It’s time you learned some discipline! Snotty brat! They’ll make a man out of you!” to which Walter responds, “A man like you?” (Wicki, 2015). Even with his father’s position as a high-ranking government official, it does little to influence how Walter views his father. He chooses to be someone/something different from his father, something, he believes, is in line with the national ideal which his father is violating.

Addressing the boys amongst his full regiment, the Lieutenant Colonel tells the soldiers, “The battalion only goes forward, and never back. Our battalion only knows ‘Battle, victory, or death”’ (Wicki, 2015). He continues “whether we live or die, history will judge whether we did our duty” (Wicki, 2015). The fate of the battalion is secondary to the cause. Later, as the boys notice the German forces retreating, Jurgen recalls the words of his Lieutenant Colonel and calls out the supposed cowardice of Germans
returning from battle, calling them “bastards” and believing “they should all be shot” (Wicki, 2015). Jurgen interprets the willingness of the other soldiers to retreat as a sign of weakness where the punishment should result in death. Comparing it to the commands of the Lieutenant Colonel, it affirms the identities of these boys as idealists.

A similar sense of idealism is engrained in the curriculum of the institution in *Young Torless*. Torless experiences confusion over the mathematical concept of the “imaginary value.” When discussing this with his instructor, Torless is told by the teacher, “My dear friend, you must simply believe. When you know ten times more math than you know now, then you'll understand it. But in the meantime, just have faith” (Schlondorff, 2005). In response to this, Beineberg says to Torless, “He didn't tell you anything. He put you off till later. Then you'll understand...When they've 'prepared' you down to their level...” (Schlondorff, 2005). Torless exhibits a sense of idealism similar to the boys in *The Bridge* as it is his first time away from home. While he doesn't place his full faith in the teachings of his math professor, he resists questioning his intent or abilities as an instructor, but Beineberg chooses to act for him.

Rather than committing to being loyal to the government in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Franz instead stresses early on that his intentions are to find order with his place in society. This view makes him susceptible to beliefs on either side of the political spectrum, the most concerning instance being when he comes across a man handing out nationalistic propaganda material. Calling it both his and Franz’s shared opinion, he tells Franz, “Are you a German man? German to the core?...Are you a German man? Word of honor? You're not with the reds. If you are, you're a traitor” (Fassbinder, 2007). Referencing the treatment of German troops following the First
World War, he continues, “The Poles, the French; the fatherland for which we shed our blood…*pulls eyelid down* That's the nation's gratitude” (Fassbinder, 2007). He proceeds to hand Franz an armband with an inverted swastika embedded on it, calling the armband an honor, to which Franz responds, “Well, if you think so…” (Fassbinder, 2007). He believes that he has this commitment to the strength and honor of the state, but one of his primary incentives for assisting in distributing the propaganda was what it would mean for him. This is followed by a prolonged speech on the hardships the German people and how they can’t be saved by communist ideology:

We had inflation, paper money, millions, billions. No meat, no butter. Nothing. And us? We just went around pinching potatoes from the farmers. Revolution? Take down the flagpole, wrap the flag in oilcloth, and put it in the closet. Let mother give you your slippers and take off your bright red armband. All you do is yap about revolution, but your republic's nothing but a calamity. A bee, a wasp, a bumblebee circles the ceiling, a natural wonder in winter. Others of its tribe, species, conviction, and genus are dead, either already dead or not yet born. The solitary bumblebee is enduring the Ice Age, not knowing how or why it should happen to him. But the sunshine is eons old. Everything seems ephemeral and trifling when one sees it. Coming from X miles away, shooting past star Y, the sun shone millions of years before Nebuchadnezzar, before Adam and Eve, before the ichthyosaurs; and now its shining in a subway station” (Fassbinder, 2007).

Franz’s affiliation with the Nazi Party was based not on a shared system of belief but of one man’s desire to re-establish a sense of order in his life. He believes that everything
changed after he was released from prison and thus conflates his individual struggle with the state of the German nation.

**Abiding by traditional gender roles**

Part of this disoriented feeling that Franz experiences is due to his interactions with women following his release. Franz’s relationships with women can often be characterized as toxic and possessive. At the beginning of the series, Franz is released from prison after serving time for manslaughter following the death of his girlfriend Ida. It establishes that Franz has a history of violence and overpowering women. His return to the outside world gives him an opportunity to start a new life, which is a goal he says later in the series he hopes to achieve. Soon he develops a relationship with a series of women that act to either reinforce or challenge his previous behavior towards women. After reconnecting with his friend Meck, Franz meets Lina, a Polish woman he soon develops feelings for. Lina provides encouragement for Franz who believes himself to be in a difficult position economically, which negatively effects his sense of masculinity. At a bar, he is challenged by a strong-man to lift a barbell and “prove” he’s a man. Lina tells Franz, “Oh come now, you’re stronger than all of them,” to which the strong-man says “That's the one thing a woman can't tell: whether the man she loves is strong” (Fassbinder, 2007).

Lina is able to find Franz a job as a salesman through her uncle, Otto. One day while attempting to sell shoelaces, Franz runs into Eva, a woman he used to pimp, who denies his advances and rejects him outright. Following this, he manages to make his way into the apartment of a widow he then seduces. After Luders attempts and fails to do the same, the widow also rejects Franz, who says, stomping on a bouquet of flowers meant
for her, “Nothing’s any use in this world” (Fassbinder, 2007). After the rejection from both women, the experience damages how Franz views himself as a man. He subsequently leaves Lina. His means of recuperating his damaged sense of masculinity are through his treatment of women as Reinhold’s friend and returning to his lifestyle as a pimp later on following an attempt on his life by Reinhold.

**Commitment to a sense of order**

Torless and Franz exhibit a degree of nuance that is not present in the propaganda material. Their actions are determined not by what they can do for the good of a higher authority but how their actions and their service to this authority help to fulfill a need for order in their lives. Torless is a firm believer of order and justice but misjudges Beineberg and Reiting’s cruelty for something defensible. But he comes to understand that these ideals are underdeveloped, and that critical exploration and confrontation were needed early on as the system meant to prevent the treatment of Basini simply worked to enable it.

Through his commitment to a sense of order and justice, Torless becomes complicit in the torture of Basini by allowing the strong to persecute the weak and defenseless. His tolerance of Beineberg’s cruelty in the name of justice is in line with what is considered acceptable masculine performance under the Nazi Party-controlled government. Basini is viewed as many things by his peers: weak, distrustful, and effeminate; Beineberg even believing that an encounter Reiting had with Basini, in which the two exchanged pornographic images, had homoerotic undertones and was curious if the two were lovers.
In his interactions with Basini, Torless views his inability to confess or even defend himself to be a weakness that can be corrected by the brute force displayed by Reiting and the cruelty demonstrated by Beineberg’s punishments which at first were meant as measures for correction but are later acknowledged by Beineberg as torture. Torless refuses to intervene in Basini’s suffering, believing that his punishment is justified by his crime. Torless’s view of Basini, as he states in the film’s conclusion, was based on a fixed understanding of good and evil.

Franz establishes that his desire for order in life is critical to his overall decision-making. Episode two features the title card: “There must be order in paradise” (Fassbinder, 2007), and includes a moment where Franz is introduced to a man distributing National Socialist propaganda called the Volkisher Beobachter. The man distributing the publication says that the paper is the “only sensible” publication that preaches the message of Germany for Germans (Fassbinder, 2007). Franz follows along and aids in the distribution of the Volkisher Beobachter as it provides a means of employment, but with a perceived sense of honor attached to the service. Franz never served in the German military nor were his political beliefs evident in his rhetoric prior to this meeting, but by working to distribute National Socialist propaganda, he was no longer unemployed. When approached by his communist acquaintances at a bar who object to the antisemitism of the movement, Franz says, “Personally, I’ve got nothing against the Jews. But I am for law and order. Everyone must see the need for order” (Fassbinder, 2007). Even though he says he once believed the ideas his friends were professing, he leaves them at the bar saying of Vladimir Lenin, “They haven’t achieved
anything. That’s enough for me” (Fassbinder, 2007). Franz is willing to commit to an idea as long as it provides something in return.

**Responding to non-hegemonic masculine performance**

The clashing moments of horror and amusement of children within the German army is viewed by the performers as a test to prove themselves as men when it instead reflects the state of desperation of the German war effort and the observable separation between the boys and the men they will never be. Professor Stern, the instructor of the boys’ literature class, refers to their engagement with news of the war effort as them “[playing] war” (Wicki, 2015). He further tramples on their dreams of fighting for their country by telling the class “We’ll soon need more railroad engineers than soldiers,” to which Jurgen objects (Wicki, 2015). While Professor Stern minimizes the significance of the war effort in the eyes of his students, he communicates that the war effort is waning and that it shouldn’t be a matter of concern for children. It sets the tone for a recurring theme throughout the film that no matter what these children do to prove themselves as men, they’re still children.

Similar to this, in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Franz is presented with the conflict of how to define himself as a man. In his encounters with Eva and the widow, his attempts to woo them go unreciprocated and he is left to wallow in self-pity and doubt, saying that “Nothing’s of any use in this world” (Fassbinder, 2007). In his relationships with the women Reinhold leaves for him to get rid of, he is afforded a sense of control over them as he plans on leaving them inevitably for someone else. But this is all at the behest of a man of greater agency. Franz becomes increasingly reflective over his past actions and the death of his fiancé Ida throughout his relationship with Reinhold, who thinks Franz
wishes to “cure him” (Fassbinder, 2007). The difference in power becomes most salient following Reinhold’s attempt to evade the cops after a botched robbery. Believing that Franz alerted the police to the scene, Reinhold throws Franz from the car, severing his arm after it is run over. In their next encounter, after believing Franz was killed, Franz shows Reinhold the scar left on his arm, which Reinhold compares to a woman’s vagina. Reinhold believed that his actions resulted in Franz’s death, and because of his connection to him, Franz is rendered less than a man. Hoping to reclaim a sense of masculine identity he believes he lost, Franz returns to pimping women as a way to maintain economic stability as a “cripple” (Fassbinder, 2007).

**Outcomes of the performances**

In contrast to the propaganda films, the postwar films present narratives where the characters do not benefit from their respective performances. *The Bridge* concludes with a wall of text fading into the scene, saying that the events of the film took place on April 27, 1945. Most relevant is the final sentence which states “It wasn’t reported or mentioned in any military communique” (Wicki, 2015). Of the seven performers in the film, Sigi Bernhard, Jurgen Borchert, Walter Forst, Karl Horber, Klaus Hager, Hans Scholten, and Albert Mutz, Albert is the lone survivor by the end. Rather than reinforcing the messages that permeated in the propaganda texts, the narrative frames these ideals as ludicrous. The performers being sent to die in the final days of war for their defeated homeland are not warriors, but children. The concept of manhood in this film hangs on the idea that it is attained through combat in war and that in order to show your strength and manhood, you must conquer your enemy combatants. However, this understanding evaporates by the conclusion when the deaths of Albert’s friends are shrugged off by
their country and its military. The truth of war becomes unavoidable as their sacrifices go ignored.

While Torless does not benefit directly from the complicit masculine performance, he does undergo a shift in perspective that is made apparent in the film’s conclusion. Torless understands that the institution will continue to allow what Beineberg and Reiting did to happen to others by not accepting responsibility for enabling the aggressive behavior of the students. He does not abide by the “imaginary value” of faith prescribed to him by the math instructor and chooses voluntary expulsion as a means of accepting responsibility for his actions and moving on from his past transgressions. The faculty and administration fail to understand Torless’s feelings on the subject nor his ideas on good and evil but expel him, nonetheless. While not directly taking part in the torture of Basini, Torless still fails to intervene until his expulsion compels him to explain his reasoning. No punishment towards Reiting or Beineberg is observed by the viewer, nor is any such punishment acknowledged by Torless or the school’s faculty. Beineberg and Reiting benefited from their performances insofar as they were never held responsible for their actions.

At the conclusion of Berlin Alexanderplatz, Franz recognizes how toxic Reinhold is in his life, but it comes after finding that he was responsible for the murder of his girlfriend, Mieze. Franz realizes that he is capable of exhibiting remorse for his actions whereas Reinhold is not. His ability to have any sort of intimate relationship with the opposite sex is restricted to what is convenient for Reinhold, not what is ideal for Franz. He loses his right arm after being thrown out of a moving vehicle by Reinhold. While his respect and feelings towards the opposite sex are still questionable due to his professional
endeavors after losing his arm, he has succeeded in preventing himself from becoming Reinhold.

**Differences in Presentation**

**Front setting vs. backstage setting**

Referring back to the metaphorical front and backstage settings as put forth by Goffman and Butler, the postwar texts demonstrate a revision of Germany’s past in order to incorporate the true experiences of the men and women who lived through that period. Though two of the sampled texts were adaptations of German novels originally published years and even decades prior to the Nazi Party being deemed politically relevant, the level of violence against an opposing other and the presence of party ideology and iconography not only form historical parallels between the texts and the past of the nation but also recontextualize these original texts to allow for political hindsight.

Comparing the two sampled texts that directly address war, Victory in the West and The Bridge, there is a stark contrast between the two in terms of tone and representation. Death is inescapable in the latter film’s second half while the former only spends roughly twenty seconds on casualties on the battlefield. There is a clear intention to avoid the subject of death as it would stifle attempts to recruit as many able-bodied German men into the armed forces as possible. The soldiers in this film are expressive of a masculine ideal that is achievable through devotion to the state and their interactions together communicate a kinship based in national solidarity. Cracks in this idea of kinship are shown in The Bridge through the children’s treatment of their smallest classmate, Sigi. The two groups of German soldiers portrayed bear little resemblance to each other, as the children in The Bridge are never viewed as the courageous soldiers in
Victory to the West. They never rise above this identity and the mission they are tasked with is to defend a bridge set for detonation the following morning. It’s almost a means of entertaining this idea that they “could be” soldiers that the children misconstrue as a genuine call to put their lives on the line for the Fatherland. To the real soldiers, they are merely playing soldiers, as their instructor put it. The difference in tone is also affected by the time in which the two narratives take place. Victory in the West is released in 1941 following Germany’s successful occupation of France while The Bridge takes place near the end of the war, with the children being viewed as a last resort as everyone seems to be getting conscripted as one messenger put it. Not only does The Bridge depict the futility of the deaths of these children and countless other soldiers, but it also illustrates the desperation of the German military at a time when Goebbels’s propaganda operation was alleviating its focus on the war effort.

**Omitted from propaganda**

The biggest omission from the propaganda pieces was the severity of the sacrifice one undertakes. Casualties in Victory in the West, though present, are relegated to only 20 seconds of the two-hour long runtime while death in The Bridge was visceral, graphic, and prolonged. Of the seven idealists enlist to serve, only one survives, with their sacrifice being deemed worthless. The authority of the state as well as the German man is never brought into question. In The Bridge, the students’ instructor pleads furiously with his student’s commander to relieve them of their duties, claiming that the ideals of Germany have been hijacked by frauds. In Young Torless, Torless’s math teacher simply tells him to have faith in the existence of imaginary numbers rather than explaining what they represent. In the face of the inevitable persecution and unjust punishment of Basini,
Torless was told to have faith in a system that turned a blind eye to its own flaws by the film’s conclusion.

**Omission affecting performance**

Ultimately, it serves to show a representation of a flawed German man. All of the performers from the selected postwar texts, Sigi, Jurgen, Walter, Karl, Klaus, Hans, Albert, Torless, and Franz, adopt a sense of masculinity that they find, initially, to be conducive of a sense of pride, order, or combination of the two that they are seeking. By the end of each piece, the performers, or rather those who are still alive by the conclusion, recognize the faults in their mode of thinking and performance while also recognizing the faults within themselves. Each individual is less concerned over how they were coerced into believing the ideals of a higher authority and more concerned with how they allowed themselves to follow these ideals. It’s an acknowledgment of agency that is crucial for the kind of critical introspection missing from the propaganda pieces. If you follow through with a theoretical ideal, you are guaranteed to have the same benefits as the men in these films. That is the message that is present in the propaganda pieces. More importantly, it limits the presence of the German man during this time to an unachievable archetype. Through the countering of the propaganda messaging in postwar media, a new German man is forged as is a new German history. These people, these characters, may have never existed as they were, but men and women, particularly German, who identify with the struggles they face during this time period are able to find new meaning in their own history and in the history of the collective German experience.
Chapter 5: Discussion

In terms of the national community frame proposed in the literature review section, the sampled propaganda pieces contained messaging that served to reinforce the ideas espoused in other related propaganda media and affiliated German social policy and military advocacy. Though the messages vary based on the subject matter discussed in these texts, they work to enable the manifestation and spreading of a model of behavior for the nation’s citizens as related to their individual gender identities, their individual and collective relationship with the state, and how these variables are connected to a theme of finding valor through “sacrifice”. In contrast to this messaging, the post-war texts sampled provide a re-evaluation of Germany’s past and recontextualize pre-existing German texts in order to incorporate new insights shaped by the experiences and hindsight of those adapting these texts. Their strategies serve to better explain the allure of the culture that allowed for the political ascension of the National Socialist German Worker’s Party. Though Adolf Hitler is never once present in the postwar texts, his ideals are inescapable but rarely are they fully embraced.

Individual as National Community

Masculine ideals and the state

In the narration for *Victory in the West*, the Treaty of Versailles which ended WWI was characterized as the “rape” of Germany. The only way for Germany to reclaim its masculinity is if it reclaims the land it lost and liberate its people from surrounding and encroaching terrorism. This meant targeting surrounding land and subjugating their respective populations to invasion, imprisonment, and death. As was shown in the literature review, Hitler framed the Treaty of Versailles and the fallout from the First
World War as an emasculating defeat that needed to be remedied by the next generation of German citizens (Feltman, 2014; O’Shaughnessy, 2009). The “young” and “strong” soldiers of Germany are brave enough to do so “without regard to enemy fire” (Noldan, 1941). These soldiers are fueled by the “masculinized hope” embedded in Hitler’s rhetoric (Nagel, 1998, pp. 244), understanding their role as loyal soldiers above all else (Appleby, 2013). Their risks are validated at the end when the soldiers are presented with the Iron Cross. Through their service, they have become the masculine representatives and idols of a new Germany.

The presence of authority in relationships is made apparent. In The Great Love, Hanna falls for German Air Force pilot Paul over her pianist, Alexander. Her feelings are confirmed only after Paul reveals to Hanna his position in the military. As his feelings for Hanna go unreciprocated, Alexander hurls sexist slurs towards Hanna. Paul as a soldier is rewarded for his service whereas Alexander, as an artist, experiences no such reward. For his sacrifice, he is granted Hanna’s hand in marriage. Paul embodies a masculine ideal akin to “warrior masculinity” due to his position in the German Air Force (Digby, 2014, pp. 54). He’s initially hesitant to reveal his position as a pilot to Hanna as it would imbue her with sorrow, as Paul believes, and thus make it difficult for Paul to manage his own feelings. Hanna’s love acts as a reward for fulfilling this hegemonic masculine archetype and wedded bliss comes as his reward for serving his country.

In The Great Sacrifice, the older Matthias coerces Albrecht into marrying his niece Octavia and ending his affair with Alz. The presence of the German state is almost nonexistent in this narrative, but Matthias acts as a medium for the reproductive regulation found in German social policy and Nazi ideology of this time. As Loroff
(2011) stated, the Nazi Party believed that “people should approach sex with the purpose of fulfilling national goals rather than pursuing their own pleasure” (pp. 52). Matthias equates Albrecht’s behavior to that of a “savage” for seeking out a relationship with the foreigner Als (Harlan, 1944). Als is also told by Matthias to end the affair, and her doctor instructs her not to engage in the masculine activities that, coincidentally, drew Albrecht to her. Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels ordered for the ending of the film to be changed, so Als would die to further a narrative against wartime adultery (Romani, 2001). The fictional propaganda pieces demonstrate both directly and indirectly a regulation of sexual behavior through the presentation and development of the ideal coupling scenario while also limiting or even eliminating the possibility of variance in pair bonding.

A recurring theme in *The Bridge* was the concern expressed on multiple sides that the seven main characters, all of who were still school children, were too young and inexperienced to serve in the armed forces. The director decided to cast children in these roles to further the brutality of war that was never present in the previous era of German filmmaking (Wicki, 2015). The boys were hoping to fulfill the pledge of being loyal soldiers that was embedded in the propaganda material of this time (Appleby, 2013). Though the children were willing to serve, party leadership expressed cowardice, demonstrated by Walter’s father, a local leader of the Party, fleeing the country with his mistress. And so, the children fought, and only one survived. Though the propaganda of the Nazi Party taught future soldiers to welcome death in order to become heroes (Reimer & Reimer, 1992), their sacrifices are quickly forgotten. Believing their demonstration of heroism would be heralded by their superiors, like the soldiers in the propaganda films
were rewarded, they were instead told by a bomb detonation squad to “go home” (Wicki, 2015). Reaffirming their identity as “children”, the lone survivor failed to transcend this state of adolescence as he believed his service in the armed forces would make men out of him and his friends. It is a sound rejection of Digby’s (2014) warrior masculinity archetype.

Similarly, in Young Torless, Basini and Torless, who both in parts represent the German populace during the war, were either subjected to cruel treatment at the behest of those in power or chose not to intervene for their own sake or for the sake of understanding. The effeminate Basini, thought by Beineberg to be a possible homosexual, received degradation similar to that of homosexuals in Nazi propaganda (Loroff, 2011). He was deemed the “other” of the institution due to his misdeeds, and through Beineberg’s coaxing, his classmates bombarded him in a form of disproportionate punishment. By the time Torless realized the moral incongruity of the situation, he experienced shame for allowing Basini’s torture to go on for as long as it did, choosing expulsion over further enabling such a violent climate of behavior. Torless understood the faults in both his approach to the situation and the institution’s handling of the matter. He chose to reject the complicit masculinity archetype so that he would not become Beineberg (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes et al, 2015). His complex understanding of morality that was formulated from this episode was reduced to babble by the school’s superiors, who had trouble comprehending Torless’s objections to the state of the institution. It was a protest that went unacknowledged simply because of his age, a condemnation of the state of the German nation by its young generation of artists (Brockmann, 2010; Fehrenbach, 1995).
Throughout *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Franz flirts but never fully commits to communist and fascist ideologies. He is easily aroused by the booming rhetoric of representatives and is quick to lash out against binary opposition. But Franz’s desire to follow the Nazi and Communist parties is based on a desire for order and an operation based more in pragmatism rather than idealism. He takes to the nationalistic rhetoric like the veterans of the First World War (Feltman, 2014), but it is not in service of an ideal as it is to take on a job opportunity. Though this does not stop him from being easily swayed. His infatuation with any party affiliation dissolves or evaporates by the following episode. His commitment to a political party, particularly the Nazi Party, like numerous other German citizens, was based in something the party could provide for them rather than what they could do for the party or what could be done against undesirable members of society. When Franz finds himself in a state of weakness or undesirability, it is not through ideology that he finds a way out of this mode of thinking but rather through occupations such as prostitution. Here, he is not only generating income but has a stable position above the women he employs. Devotion to or following of party ideology has little effect on Franz’s overall sense of self.

**Hegemonic performance and sacrifice**

The overall message regarding sacrifice in the propaganda pieces sampled communicates that sacrifice is noble, honorary, and necessary. The titular march to Braunau in *March to the Fuhrer* begins outside of a mausoleum with a close-up shot of a message on it stating, “The glory of the dead is eternal.” The dead referenced here and later on are acknowledged as “martyrs of the movement” by the film’s narration. It affirms the promise made through similar propaganda of the time that the dead would be
properly recognized as heroes (Reimer & Reimer, 1992). In chants, the Hitler Youth marching say that like Hitler, they too shall sacrifice for the state, at one time singing, “Brother, I am going to die for the Fatherland.” The dead shall be shown respect, as seen in Victory in the West’s 30 seconds of footage of a burial site. The women of the films’ narratives must also demonstrate sacrifice for their relationship. Referring back to Loroff (2011), relationships were meant to serve the good of the state over individual pleasure or the wishes of the couple. Hanna in The Great Love is coerced by Paul into falling in love with him and changing into the desperate for love persona she enacts in her songs, while Als in The Great Sacrifice cannot love Albrecht as he must love Octavia for their love is pure. They have a part to play for the sanctity of hegemonic gender and coupling norms, even if that means death.

The purpose of Bernhard Wicki’s The Bridge, according to the director, was to demonstrate that the sacrifice one endures for the state during senseless war is not worth it (Wicki, 2015). This point is made literal as the boys are tasked with defending a bridge set for detonation by German forces. In the film’s conclusion, text fades into view stating that these events of the film took place on April 27, 1945, and that the matter was never reported on in any military communique. There is a deep lack of respect for the dead demonstrated here. Similarly, in Young Torless, Torless explains to Basini that his classmates never intended on forgiving him of his crimes. Basini sacrificed himself for false gain, and his salvation came only by the intervention of faculty, not Torless. Even then, the faculty chose to believe Beineberg over Torless. Basini was always a target for humiliation and wrath. There was little to nothing he could have done to appease his tormentors.
In *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, the sacrifices Franz endures in his tumultuous relationship with Reinhold can be best described by a text card featured in the series’ sixth episode: “Love has its price”. Franz loses his arm after being thrown out of a moving car by Reinhold, believing that he tipped his criminal operation off to the authorities. Franz no longer sees himself as a man after his ordeal, being told by Reinhold that his scar looks “nasty” and compares it to a vagina. He has sacrificed his manhood through his partnership with Reinhold and through his attempt to reform after his prison sentence. Franz’s commitment to his friendship with Reinhold causes his personal life and sexual freedom to become regulated by Reinhold. Franz is only allowed to be with someone who Reinhold no longer has use for, and such relationships only last for a short duration as Franz needs to take on a new lover for Reinhold. This serves as a critique of the biological regulation by the state that Loroff (2011) describes in his article. Failing to heed the warning of his friend Meck, Franz’s choice to stay with Reinhold leads him to losing his arm and his girlfriend, Mieze, who is killed by Reinhold for refusing his advances. Franz only realizes the severity of his loss once Reinhold is arrested and imprisoned for his crimes, including Mieze’s death. His search for order in his life led him down a dubious, “self-destructive” path of “hyper-masculinity” that left him a broken man (Jewkes et al, 2015, pp. 114). The sacrifices Franz takes on in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, he believes, reduces him to something less than a man.

**Comparing Ideal Gender Norms**

**Interactions with women**

In the propaganda texts, women are portrayed as emotional and not worthy of becoming martyrs for the cause. As Appleby (2013) implied in her article, propaganda
and education from this period in German history taught that boys specifically would “protect their nation” (pp. 6). The women of the sampled propaganda texts voice discouragement against military service that is brushed off; displays of emotions are viewed as weakness; and they are figures that can be “tamed”. In March to the Fuhrer, Hans reinforces the idea of privilege that comes with participating in the annual Hitler March. He does this in the face of opposition from a mother refusing to allow her child to participate. This scene illustrates Welch’s (2004) claim that German youth valued allegiance to the nation over their own families. In The Great Love, independent singer Hanna becomes the object of infatuation for fighter pilot Paul, whose advances are constantly rejected until he returns to service. At which point, Hanna inexplicably feels that she is drawn to him, with her pianist Alexander feeling as though this is simply because her “vanity has been hurt.” It gives the impression that women portray a front based on personal pride that can be easily chipped away. And by giving herself to Paul, she is indirectly rewarding him for his service as the military propaganda from this time promised.

In the case of Octavia and Als in The Great Sacrifice, their actions are essentially determined by what main character Albrecht desires or what is told to them by a man of greater authority. The roles of the women in these pieces are limited to the desires of the masculine main character (Albrecht) or are based on the wishes of a masculine authority of greater agency (Matthias, Terboven). When this authority is challenged, for instance Als’s drive to take part in physically demanding activities, their deviation from hegemonic gender norms result in punishment of some kind. This presumed punishment takes the form of emotional hardship and loneliness for Hanna and death for Als. These
women lack control over their lives, and their social roles were ascribed to them as were their fates (Loroff, 2011; Romani, 2001)

In the postwar texts, this understood, implicit sense of masculine superiority deteriorates. Women within The Bridge inspire rage amongst main characters Karl and Walter, as they feel that their fathers are conspiring against them for the sake of their lover. For Karl, this is instigated by his disappointment that his father’s assistant, Barbara, sleeps with his father and not him, viewing Karl as “just a child.” In Young Torless, Torless does not know how to interact with the older, motherly prostitute Bozena, who is shown as his first interaction with sexual infatuation. Bozena mistakes this for a personal sense of purity, as Torless’s companion Beineberg is willing to engage in erotic acts with her. As this and other interactions near the film’s conclusion illustrate, these immature and inexperienced children are just that, children. The reduction to this idea of youthfulness and naiveté violates the models of masculine hegemony they were wishing to uphold. Karl, Walter, and their friends are not ready for the battlefield, and the boys of these two films are not ready to engage intimately with the opposite sex. They are stripped of their roles as warriors and are faced with their reduced position on the hegemonic hierarchy (Brandes, 2007; Digby, 2014).

In three different instances within the series Belin Alexanderplatz, a woman is assaulted for not accepting the advances of a man: Ida, the widow, and Mieze. Following Franz Biberkopf’s release from prison, flashbacks show that he was incarcerated for killing his fiancé Ida. After successfully seducing a widow living next door to Franz’s former prostitute Eva, his business partner Luders confronts, assaults, and robs the widow as he believed she would give in to his advances as she did with Franz. Fearing for her
life, the widow rejects Franz. Later on, when Reinhold attempts to seduce Franz’s girlfriend Mieze, she refuses his advances which leads to Reinhold strangling and killing her. Meck helps to dispose of the body, only to report it to Franz, who is relieved after believing that she had run off with another man. Franz and Reinhold uphold toxic, “hyper-masculine” performances that lead to a shared destruction (Jewkes, et al, 2015, pp. 114). Reinhold views women as objects that can be cast aside when they no longer serve him any interest. Franz’s relationships with women become regulated by Reinhold’s desire to “get rid of” his romantic partners when they no longer serve as a convenience for him. Franz becomes increasingly reluctant and remorseful, and with Reinhold’s arrest following Mieze’s death, he is finally rid of him. Though Franz uses prostitution as a means to reclaim his masculine identity following Reinhold’s attempt to kill him, his relationship with Reinhold allows him to better understand the violent and toxic nature of his former self. Franz discovers that he is able to reflect on his past misdeeds and move forward whereas Reinhold cannot. With Mieze’s death, he can no longer maintain this hyper-masculine performance.

**Interactions with other men**

In *March to the Fuhrer’s* footage of marching Hitler Youth, young German boys are seen following through their march to Nurnberg and Braunau and are encouraged by the Hitler Youth to join their ranks when they come of age. This appears to be a direct message to the audience as, for instance, a Hitler Youth named Hans encourages a child much younger than him by telling him and his family how the experience and the promise to appear before the Fuhrer has shaped his life. The indoctrination of German youth was one of the primary goals of the propaganda produced from this period.
(Appleby, 2013), And Hans frames his experience as one that aided his journey to manhood. His interaction with fellow Hitler Youth affirmed and reinforced this identity as is common in homosocial interactions (Bird, 1996; Britton, 1990; Flood, 2008).

As the piece progresses, the number of marchers increase dramatically, growing from hundreds to tens of thousands. The presence of Adolf Hitler is prominent within the nonfictional propaganda pieces, as the marchers and soldiers both pledge an oath to serve him first and foremost, and to risk their lives. Nearly 1/3 of *March to the Fuhrer* consists of Hitler’s address to the nearly 53,000 Hitler Youth in attendance. Hitler gave form to O’Shaughnessy’s (2009) hypothetical modern German man as the film concludes by reminding those in attendance the sacrifice he made for the movement and how they too can act for the good of the state.

In *Victory in the West*, the narrator even equates loyalty and obedience to him as “true love” (Noldan, 1941). This, along with the inclusion of footage of the German soldiers bathing and tending to their weaponry gives the piece a homoerotic tone at times. They find comfort in each other’s company in fairly intimate settings while preparing for the next battle. Unlike marginalized behavior, the nature of these interactions nor the masculinity of the soldiers are not questioned (Bird, 1996). Instead, it’s presented as a lighthearted scene that contrasts to the glorification of death found in other propaganda material (Reimer & Reimer, 1992). The newsreel presents the benefits of military service through the kinship amongst soldiers and through rewarding them the Iron Cross, conquered land, and liberation of their fellow man.

The children of *The Bridge* express an unshaken idealism for armed service, mirroring the messages of propaganda like the previous two films discussed (Appleby,
2013), while also commenting on their allegiance to the state above their own families (Welch, 2004). However, the sense of kinship in Victory in the West is damaged in Wicki’s war drama. The smallest of the film’s seven boys, Sigi, is constantly mocked for his stature and displays of presumed cowardice. The root of his argument to serve in the German armed forces is to prove himself as a man to his friends. They marginalize him (Bird, 1996), and take advantage of his small size to question his identity as a man. An attempt at bravery is ultimately what costs him his life as he is shot at by American air forces, refusing to find cover. Jurgen fears the war will end with Germany’s surrender and discourages peace, as well as retreating, believing that those who do so, regardless of injury should be shot. He’s maintaining the performance that was taught to him by his father and further reinforced by his friends. In a private conversation with friend Albert, Hans reveals that he expresses fear during the air raids but does not see it as weakness. Through their interactions, they communicate how they define themselves and men and what is necessary for this. They demonstrate to the viewer that elements of their reasoning are not entirely shared amongst each other. Though Hans reveals his vulnerability to Albert, this does not stop him in participating in this mocking of the smallest of the group.

Beineberg and Reiting of Young Torless, when confronted with effeminate Basini’s crimes of theft and supposed obscenity, choose to torture him, using these crimes as leverage that he wouldn’t go to actual authorities. Like Sigi, Basini is among the smallest and weakest of the boys in the institution. Beineberg isolates and targets him because of this with the crime of theft covering for the violent tendencies of Beineberg, Reiting, and eventually the other boys at the school. Reiting replicates the torture against
Basini on a small mouse, which Torless kills out of mercy. Beineberg exerts his influence over his fellow students to enact a demonstration of violence and humiliation against Basini. There is an explicit targeting of those considered weaker than oneself that leads to the supposedly weaker being considered “other” compared to the boys. *Young Torless* demonstrates how homosocial interaction can arouse negativity and violence towards otherness and the consequences it can have for the victims.

When Franz meets Reinhold for the first time in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Franz is fixated on the man’s “sad eyes” as a possible indication that he served time in prison like Franz (Fassbinder, 2007). As their relationship progresses, Franz is given the responsibility of disposing of the women of whom Reinhold no longer “has a need for”. He attempts to reason with Reinhold as he grows further reluctant to continue the practice. Reinhold views this as Franz’s attempt to “cure” him and responds to his refusal to continue saying “I got by without you before” (Fassbinder, 2007). In the context of a romantic melodrama, which film scholars have analyzed it as in the past, this sounds similar to a couple breaking up. The reduction in Reinhold’s eyes of Franz to the same plain as women, coupled with the greater levels of physical violence acted against Franz, gives the presentation that the two are engaged in an abusive relationship. This is further reinforced by a text card that follows Reinhold’s act of throwing Franz from a car that says, “Love has its price” (Fassbinder, 2007). The homosocial dynamic between the two early on evolves into a more homoerotic context that culminates in a hallucinatory scene in the series epilogue in which the two men kiss as they engage in a makeshift boxing fight. Through their interactions, Franz’s romantic life was subject to Reinhold’s oversight. Reinhold had power over Franz and knew this. Reinhold never saw Franz as an
equal and he was placed at the same level of the women he “no longer needed” (Fassbinder, 2007). There is no kinship; there is no community. In the eyes of Reinhold, Beineberg, and Adolf Hitler, there is only power.

**Limitations and Future Considerations**

There are limitations to these findings as the texts sampled were all made by male filmmakers. In an analysis on the construction of gender within a specific region, the findings are then limited to what is communicated by male filmmakers. Following the postwar period near the end of the Cold War, there was a wave of female filmmakers who found an opportunity to craft or present narratives that communicated the current state of German society and how German construction of gender identity and performance was shaped by its history (Brockmann, 2010). Though the homoerotic overtones in Berlin Alexanderplatz made it distinguishable from the other sampled texts, a direct acknowledgment of queer perspectives from this time period was nonexistent in the sample. Another limitation of the findings was the selection of internationally recognized German media. As it was mentioned in the literature review, filmmakers like Fassbinder and Schlondorff were well known within the festival circuits as the period of New German Cinema in the 1970s was nearing its peak. Through the Criterion Collection, the sampled postwar texts were distributed throughout North America and Europe in the decades that followed their original release or broadcast and they have since been received as works representing the political strife and historical resentment that was present within West Germany during this time. To say that these works were all that could communicate how Germany perceived and presented masculinity would be ludicrous. What this framing analysis does, instead, is present examples of how German
filmmakers used their works and the works of German writers of the past to challenge the ideals that were present in Nazi propaganda when they were at the height of their global significance.

Since the postwar period, an ideological conflict has arisen regarding how to approach national defense nearly a century after being recognized as a militaristic authoritarian society. In a 2019 article published in the *Atlantic*, Noah Barkin profiled a 35-year-old German veteran named Alex, who served a tour in Afghanistan and survived what was called “The Good Friday Battle,” where Alex and his fellow soldiers were ambushed by Taliban forces days before Easter 2010. When asked about experiences when he is recognized as a veteran, Alex says, “A lot of Germans think of us as murderers. They hate us…and those who don’t hate us couldn’t care less about us” (Barkin, 2019). Barkin describes Germany as entrenched in a deep pacifism resulting from two world wars and four decades of division during the Cold War. Their accomplishments are rarely openly commended by the German government or individual public officials, and the term veteran is often associated with Nazi (Barkin, 2019).

Though steps have been taken to make sure that veterans experiencing symptoms of PTSD are taken care of through the Department of Defense, Barkin acknowledges that this only covers a percentage of overall veterans. The German military lacks a system to track the social status or mental health of veterans who are no longer serving as members of the Bundeswehr, the unified armed forces of the German states (Barkin, 2019). Any attempt to formally acknowledge the sacrifices made by German veterans was met with fierce backlash both within and outside of German parliament. It is clear that a stigma exists against the German military and the concept of military service, but what is
significant about this is that it can have major consequences for the health of returning veterans. What Barkin does in his article is show that the stigma is present, but how did this manifest and what factors affect its continuing presence? As far-right leaning political organizations assume a greater presence within parliament and stage greater terrorist demonstrations (Apperly, 2019), the stigma against national defense could have implications on how masculinity is defined within Germany. Alienated German veterans experience in their nation could be used as a valuable asset for these far-right groups to acquire greater political capital as Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers Party did following the First World War.

**Conclusion**

Through the usage of framing and performance analysis, this thesis demonstrated the differences in messaging between German propaganda texts produced during WWII and the West German cinema that followed the end of the war. The analysis of the sampled texts identified key differences in concepts regarding kinship, sacrifice, and hegemonic masculine performance. The propaganda texts framed the country as unified under the Nazi Party ideology, with dissenters and marginalized groups either stigmatized or rendered nonexistent to the viewer. The postwar texts highlighted how German citizens were willing to mock, betray, mutilate, and kill their own to serve their own selfish purposes. The valor that came with military service and death was acknowledged as tainted. The children who defended the titular bridge died before achieving the manhood they craved. Basini was tormented for false gain. Torless was expelled while Basini’s tormenters walked free. Franz was made a “cripple” by the man he considered a friend (Fassbinder, 2007). By following in the footsteps of warriors and brutes in the
hopes that they could be like them, observe them, or help them, the performers of these postwar texts lost their status, their pride, their manhood, and their lives. The artists of this period condemned the fascist Germany of the past by presenting a true German history through fiction. The ideals that were presented in propaganda were contradicted and discredited in the new Germany. Thus, a new German man was made from its history and for its future.
References


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*The March to the Fuhrer* [Motion picture]. (1940). Berlin, Germany: GmbH.


## Appendix

### March to the Fuhrer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is/are the performer(s)?</td>
<td>Hans, Hitler Youth (in unison)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What hegemonic ideals are communicated in their performance?</td>
<td>• Unity through the state  &lt;br&gt;• Loyalty to the state  &lt;br&gt;• Subservience to a higher authority  &lt;br&gt;• Abiding by traditional gender roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do the performers respond to any non-hegemonic portrayals of masculinity?</td>
<td>• During the dinner scene, when Fritz’s mother and sister display unease towards Fritz’s possible participation in future marches: &quot;It's a privilege for the youth to participate in the Adolf Hitler march.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the positive outcomes of the performance?</td>
<td>• The Hitler Youth crowd together to show their support to the leader of their country, their ideology. By literally following in line with his teachings, they are allowed to be in the presence of Adolf Hitler.  &lt;br&gt;• The Hitler Youth visiting with families are able to convince younger children to consider joining them in future marches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the negative consequences of the performance?</td>
<td>• n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the performers benefit from their performance?</td>
<td>• Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the theme of sacrifice made present in the narrative?</td>
<td>• During the film, the Hitler youth marching towards Braunau utter numerous chants as children gaze and follow.  &lt;br&gt;○ “Brother, I am going to die for the Fatherland…My darling girl, you don't get to come along.” Before they are set to join the battlefield, or even enlist in the German army, they are already booming that they will give up their own lives for the state.</td>
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</table>
- The banners raised at the Konigsplatz in Munchen are to honor the first “martyrs of the movement,” implying that the ideological cause of the Nazis takes precedent over the country.
- In his speech in Nuremberg, Adolf Hitler equates the youth fighting and dying in the war for Germany to them “[shaping] their grand destiny” and “[becoming] something greater,” and that these youth must confront the challenges ahead “for past generations.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Victory in the West</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is/are the performer(s)?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **What hegemonic ideals are communicated in their performance?** | • Subservience to a higher authority  
• Deriving strength from military |
| **How do the performers respond to any non-hegemonic portrayals of masculinity?** | • The narrator refers to the “shameful” Treaty of Versailles, the agreement that ended WWI, as “the rape of Germany”. The invading of surrounding land was called “breaking the chains of Versailles” and “reclaiming what is German”.  
• The invasion of Poland is described as a liberation effort for German nationals who had been taken captive by Polish terrorists. |
| **What are the positive outcomes of the performance?** | • Germany is victorious in their battle against France  
- "For this successful outcome in this greatest battle in world history, we should thank, above all, the German soldier. Wherever he was sent, he distinguished himself in the worthiest manner." |
| **What are the negative consequences of the performance?** | • German casualties are present, though briefly.  
• More time in the film is dedicated towards paying respect for the dead (0:00:28) than presenting footage of casualties from both sides (0:00:20). |
| **Do the performers benefit from their performance?** | • Yes |
| **How is the theme of sacrifice made present in the narrative?** | • By putting their lives on the line and showing “true love” to Adolf Hitler and the nation of Germany, those who survived the conflict were rewarded the Iron Cross. |
- "Without regard to enemy fire, bridges over the Maas River are built."
### The Great Love

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is/are the performer(s)?</th>
<th>Paul Wendlandt, Hanna Holberg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What hegemonic ideals are communicated in their performance? | - Abiding by traditional gender roles  
- Objectification of the opposite sex  
- Deriving strength from military |
| How do the performers respond to any non-hegemonic portrayals of masculinity? | - Alexander’s unreciprocated love for Hanna  
- She later confesses to Alexander that she loves Paul, which Alexander disputes  
  o "You tell yourself you love him because your vanity has been hurt."  
  o "It is not easy to be friends with a woman; one easily becomes a tragic figure"  
  o "Or perhaps even worse…a comic event"  
- During a rehearsal, Alexander shouts at Hanna as she departs to see Paul: "That's it? Simply walks out on us, the bitch!"
<p>| What are the positive outcomes of the performance? | - Though wounded from a jet crash, Paul and Hanna wed and live happily ever after. |
| What are the negative consequences of the performance? | - Hanna’s increasing infatuation with Paul becomes grating for Alexander, and as the affair progresses, his true feelings for Hanna come to light, and are subsequently mixed in with jealousy and rage. He ends his friendship with the singer and is now left alone. |
| Do the performers benefit from their performance? | - Yes |
| How is the theme of sacrifice made present in the narrative? | - Hanna gives up a life of independence to marry a pilot and to be “tamed” for domestic life. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Great Sacrifice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is/are the performer(s)?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **What hegemonic ideals are communicated in their performance?** | • Subservience to a higher authority  
• Abiding by traditional gender roles  
• Commitment to a monogamous relationship |
| **How do the performers respond to any non-hegemonic portrayals of masculinity?** | • Als’s more physically active presence within the community presents her as a near opposite to the passive Octavia.  
  - Als to Terboven: "I want to live. I don't want to linger. I don't want to think all the time whether I may do this or not. I'd rather live a shorter time. What does it matter if one dies at 25 or 26? But I want to get something out of those 25 years."  
  - Octavia about Als: "Look at this! The way men look after her, nobody ever looks after me on the street, even though everyone tells me I'm beautiful...Albrecht has told me. What's the secret?"  
  Matthias: "Octavia, you should be lucky nobody looks after you on the street like that; you're such a pure person." |
| **What are the positive outcomes of the performance?** | • Albrecht can now lead a simple life with Octavia as his wife. |
| **What are the negative consequences of the performance?** | • Due to Als exerting herself for Albrecht’s affection, Als ultimately dies from the illness she has carried since birth. As she passes, she envisions a moment with Albrecht in which he confesses that his love for Octavia is absolute, and because of this, Albrecht cannot be in love with Als. |
| **Do the performers benefit from their performance?** | • Seemingly, Yes. While Als met an untimely fate, Octavia was able to |
fulfill a final request for Als, at Albrecht’s behest. And while Albrecht acknowledges both in reality and in Als’s dream that, for Octavia’s sake, he cannot be with her, this strengthens the bond that Albrecht and Octavia share.

| How is the theme of sacrifice made present in the narrative? | • Als accepts her grim fate so that Albrecht and Octavia can be together  
- As she dies, Als believes she is speaking with Albrecht, who tells her that he loves Octavia and that marriage is the "great sacrifice" |


<table>
<thead>
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<th>The Bridge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is/are the performer(s)?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **What hegemonic ideals are communicated in their performance?** | • Subservience to a higher authority  
• Deriving strength from military  
• Loyalty to the state  
• Expressive of difference/superiority toward the opposite sex  
• Belittling non-hegemonic masculine performance |
| **How do the performers respond to any non-hegemonic portrayals of masculinity?** | • Professor Stern, the instructor of the boys’ literature class, refers to their engagement with news of the war effort as them “[playing] war”.  
• Jurgen takes objection to Stern’s stating that “We’ll soon need more railroad engineers than soldiers.”  
• Sigi when his mother begs that he run away instead of facing conscription: “What will the others say?”  
• The boys reacting to Sigi dropping to the ground to avoid getting shot by an enemy aircraft: "Just going to lie there till victory?" "Did you wet your pants?" "What would mommy say if she saw you down there?"  
• Karl’s father to Karl: "It shouldn't be that bad at this point. You'll have months of basic training, and by then…". Barbara to Karl’s father: “He’s just a child…They belong in kindergarten, not in barracks!”  
Enraged by his father’s feelings toward Barbara, as well as his own, Karl runs away.  
• Sigi’s Mother: “He’s just a child!”  
Sigi: “I’m not a deserter.”  
• Wounded soldier to Sigi: “Sonny, have some chocolate before they put you in a box yourself." After they retreat, Jurgen says, "Those bastards just run off! They should all be shot!" |
<p>| What are the positive outcomes of the performance? | • Albert survives but has killed a bomb detonation squad trying to defend his now deceased friend Hans. |
| What are the negative consequences of the performance? | • All but one of the children die on the battlefield and Albert is left physically and psychologically scarred by the experience. |
| Do the performers benefit from their performance? | • No, as all but Albert are dead by the film’s conclusion. |
| How is the theme of sacrifice made present in the narrative? | • The concept of manhood in this film hails on the idea that it is attained through combat in war and that in order to show your strength and manhood, you must conquer your enemy combatants. However, this understanding evaporates by the conclusion when the deaths of Albert’s friends are shrugged off by, and in one case directly attributed to their country and its military respectively. As the film fades to black, a closing text reveals that what took place occurred in 1945 but went unreported. |
|  | • The idealism that was engrained into these children so that they would grow up to become soldiers leads them to becoming cannon fodder. With only Hans and Albert left standing, the bomb detonation team communicates to the two soldiers that their sacrifices, and those of the fallen were all for nothing: “Go home.” |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Young Torless</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is/are the performer(s)?</strong></td>
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| **What hegemonic ideals are communicated in their performance?** | **• Obedience to a higher authority**  
**• Commitment to a sense of order and justice**  
**• Showing allegiance to the strong and persecuting the weak**  |
| **How do the performers respond to any non-hegemonic portrayals of masculinity?** | **• Torless and Basini:**  
- Torless views Basini’s inability to confess or even defend himself to be a weakness that can be corrected by the brute force displayed by Reiting and the cruelty demonstrated by Beineberg’s punishments which at first were meant as measures for correction but are later acknowledged by Beineberg as torture.  
- Torless refuses to intervene in Basini’s suffering, believing that his punishment is justified by his crime. Torless’s view of Basini, as he states in the film’s conclusion, was based on a fixed understanding of good and evil.  
- Basini is viewed as many things by his peers: weak, distrustful, and effeminate; Beineberg even believing that an encounter Reiting had with Basini, in which the two exchanged pornographic images, had homoerotic undertones and was curious if the two were lovers.  |
| **What are the positive outcomes of the performance?** | **• Shift in Performance**  
- Torless understands that the institution will continue to allow what Beineberg & Reiting did to happen to others by not accepting responsibility for enabling the aggressive behavior of the students. He no |
longer abides by the “imaginary value” of faith prescribed to him by the math instructor and chooses voluntary expulsion as a means of accepting responsibility for his actions and moving on from his past transgressions. The faculty & administration fail to understand Torless’s feelings on the subject nor his ideas on good and evil but expel him nonetheless.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the negative consequences of the performance?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Torless is complicit in Basini’s torture and fails to intervene until his expulsion compels him to explain his reasoning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No punishment towards Reiting or Beineberg is observed by the viewer, nor is any such punishment acknowledged by Torless or the school’s faculty.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do the performers benefit from their performance?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• No, for failing to come forward with the truth about Basini and for failing to justify his reasoning as well as his reasoning for leaving the campus during Basini’s final session of torture, Torless was expelled and ordered to leave campus. Beineberg and Reiting’s explanation/lie sat well with the faculty and the faculty found their initial reason for not coming forward to be just.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- However, it was through this experience that Torless came to an understanding of how humans, as well as human institutions, are flawed and how easy it can be for something seemingly pure and righteous to fall down a path of darkness, and vice/versa.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Ultimately, what was taught to him by both domestic and scholarly institutions were not</td>
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</table>
How is the theme of sacrifice made present in the narrative?

<p>| • Basini is sacrificing himself and his dignity for forgiveness that never comes as the judgment that was placed on him was always meant as a means of torture and humiliation. |
| • By committing to Beineberg’s plan and not providing some form of intervention, Torless’s character is called into question and he is ultimately expelled. However, Torless’s sacrifice came at the sake of his newfound understanding of humanity’s will to evil, or rather, the ambiguity that lies between good and evil. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Berlin Alexanderplatz</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Who is/are the performer(s)?</strong></td>
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| **What hegemonic ideals are communicated in their performance?** | • Dedication to traditional gender roles  
• Subservience to higher authority  
• Commitment to and showing value towards a sense of domestic order  
• Acknowledgement of the strength, stability, and honor of the state. |
| **How do the performers respond to any non-hegemonic portrayals of masculinity?** | • Franz demonstrates early on that he is for “peace” at the sake of one’s suffering (the meaning of peace is closer to that of stability in this context).  
- To him, communists show a lack of pragmatic thinking, even though he used to believe what they said.  
- Facing rejection from Eva and the widow: “Nothing’s any use in this world.”  
- Franz wishes to demonstrate nonviolence so that he may “go straight,” forgive himself for his past actions, and lead a new life. However, this is all made difficult from interference from Luders and Reinhold.  
- Franz becomes increasingly reflective over his past actions and the death of his fiancé Ida throughout his relationship with Reinhold.  
- Franz exhibits guilt and remorse, which Reinhold lacks. |
| **What are the positive outcomes of the performance?** | • Shift in Performance  
- Franz rids himself of Reinhold as he is sent to prison for Mieze’s death.  
- Franz is able to express remorse for his actions which Reinhold is incapable of doing. |
| **What are the negative consequences of the performance?** | • Franz’s ability to have any sort of intimate relationship with the |
### Do the performers benefit from their performance?
- Yes and no. While his respect and feelings towards the opposite sex are still questionable due to his professional endeavors after losing his arm, he has succeeded in preventing himself from becoming Reinhold.

### How is the theme of sacrifice made present in the narrative?
- Early on, Franz’s infatuation with the National Socialist German Workers Party isolates him from the group of bar patrons he once called his friends. However, as he puts it, his belief in the party is a means to an end, a way to reclaim the sense of order he lost not with his imprisonment, but with the death of Ida. Through his explanation of his previous communist sympathies, it was a surface-level understanding of the concept that he picked up on from his friends, rather than a devotion to a political ideology/economic system that his friends held.
- Franz’s commitment to his friendship with Reinhold causes his personal life and sexual freedom to become regulated by him. Franz is only allowed to be with someone who Reinhold no longer has use for, and such relationships only last for a short duration as Franz needs to take on a new lover for Reinhold.
  - Failing to heed the warning of his friend Meck, Franz’s choice to stay with Reinhold leads him...

- Opposite sex is restricted to what is convenient for Reinhold, not what is ideal for Franz.
  - Franz loses his right arm after being thrown out of a moving vehicle by Reinhold.
  - Franz’s girlfriend Mieze is murdered by Reinhold after she rejects his advances.
to losing his arm and his girlfriend, Mieze, who is killed by Reinhold for refusing his advances.
- Franz only realizes the severity of his loss once Reinhold is arrested and imprisoned for his crimes, including Mieze’s death.