“Shattered Childhoods:” A Children’s History of the November Pogrom

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I give permission to Lauinger Library to make this thesis available to the public.
Introduction

In the early morning hours of November 7, 1938 seventeen-year-old Herschel Grynszpan, a Polish-Jewish refugee, walked into the German embassy in Paris. Upon presenting himself at the reception desk, Grynszpan claimed to have sensitive intelligence to be seen by the ambassador’s eyes only. The ambassador had just left for his morning walk, so the embassy secretary directed Grynszpan to the office of Ernst vom Rath, a junior diplomat with the German delegation. As he entered vom Rath’s office, Grynszpan pulled out the revolver he bought earlier that morning and shot vom Rath five times in the abdomen, killing the German diplomat with a shot to his stomach.¹

Grynszpan’s act was a reaction against the forcible expulsion of Jews with Polish citizenship from German territory. In late-October 1938, German authorities had forced these approximately 17,000 Jews to leave their homes and return to Poland in what became known as the “Polenaktion,” or “Polish action.”² Grynszpan’s family from Hanover was among this group, and after learning of the horrific conditions they were subjected to on the German-Polish border, Grynszpan decided to take retaliatory action against the German ambassador in Paris, where he was currently living.

The assassination of a middle-level German diplomat had implications that affected millions of people. After top Nazi officials such as Joseph Goebbels, the Reich minister of propaganda, learned that a Jew murdered a German diplomat, the German government immediately began preparations for retaliation as a pretext to attack Germany’s Jews.³ Within four days, a

³ There is a large scholarly debate surrounding whether the violence was state-sponsored or a eruption of popular violence. This debate is described in detail in the following pages. For the order cited by historians as evidence that
nationwide wave of antisemitic violence had swept through German-controlled territories that saw the widespread destruction of Jewish property and the imprisonment of thousands of Jewish men in the concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald.  

At the time of the assassination, Herschel Grynszpan was only seventeen years old. The fact that it was the action of a Jewish teenager which was used as the reason to incite the violence demonstrates the centrality of Jewish children and youths in the study of the November Pogrom. However, most scholars have yet to apply the lens of childhood and youth to an examination of the so-called “Kristallnacht,” or the “Night of the Broken Glass,” which took place between November 9 and 11, 1938.  

This nationwide wave of mass violence is commonly conceptualized as a major turning point in Nazi antisemitic policy, as it was one of the first coordinated waves of mass violence against German Jews.  

While the application of the history of childhood to the broader study of the Holocaust has yielded a multitude of new studies, few scholars have paid much attention to analyzing the Pogrom through the experiences of both Jewish and non-Jewish children.  

Ironically, the November Pogrom is one of the most studied events in the history of Nazi Germany, yet the vast
majority of historical analyses concerning the Pogrom do not include any discussion of the experiences of German children under Nazi control. This thesis seeks to address the question of how our view of the November Pogrom can be nuanced by analyzing the violence from the perspective of German children.

**Historiography**

Even though the Holocaust has been studied for more than a half-century, scholars have only recently begun to pay attention to the diverse experiences of different Jewish populations in Nazi-occupied Europe. From ghettoization to extermination, thousands of studies have analyzed numerous aspects of the Nazi program to murder Europe’s Jewish population. However, traditional Holocaust scholarship has generally focused on analyzing specific perspectives, such as the lives of Jewish men who survived death camps and the motivations of the perpetrators themselves. More recently, historians have sought to examine this history from a variety of perspectives, with a focus on the history of everyday life.

Moreover, recent studies of the Holocaust have sought to address the social history of Nazi Germany from an interdisciplinary perspective. This new development invokes important questions of how we can synthesize a variety of perspectives, including children of different religious backgrounds, in writing an integrated history of the Holocaust. Historian Saul Friedländer, who is widely considered to be one of the strongest supporters of such an approach,  

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8 This approach, known as *Alltagsgeschichte* in German historiography, highlights how an analysis of ordinary people can shed light on macro-level political and social phenomena. An example of these new perspectives is the exploration of a women’s history of the Holocaust. For a recent study that provides a broad overview of this new historiography, see Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017).
emphasized that the Holocaust cannot be examined solely from a German perspective and must include “a simultaneous representation of the events - at all levels and in all different places.”

This approach, of synthesizing Jewish and non-Jewish voices from a variety of locations throughout the Reich, is a key marker of more recent studies relating to the social history of the Holocaust, including stories of children under Nazi domination.

The first study to focus on the lives of Jewish children in Nazi Germany was Déborah Dwork’s *Children with a Star*, published in 1991. Dwork’s foundational work was the first to address the question of how Jewish children responded to the Nazi program of antisemitism and eventual extermination in different ways. Drawing primarily upon oral histories, Dwork made the argument that Jewish children, contrary to the notion that they were “powerless” in the face of imminent destruction, demonstrated an ability to actively contribute to their families’ survival.

Dwork’s work was a major breakthrough in examining the social history of Nazi Germany. As eminent Holocaust scholar Deborah Lipstadt argued, “although many of the details Dwork relates are well known, telling it through the eyes of the children helps bring into sharp focus the injustice and horror that has become routinely known as the Holocaust.”

Dwork’s focus on individual stories, however, does raise important questions concerning the ways in which we can view the history of the Holocaust “from below.” This thesis seeks to draw upon Dwork’s approach in its examination of children during the November Pogrom. Rather than synthesizing

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archival materials with survivor testimonies, Dwork uses, almost exclusively, oral histories of survivors to form her thesis. The use of this source material is problematic. Nine out of every ten Jewish children were murdered during the Holocaust. Oral histories only give us access to a small percentage of Jewish children under Nazi rule.\textsuperscript{12}

Additionally, Dwork’s work only focused on the experiences of German-Jewish children and excluded the perspectives of non-Jewish children. Only in 2005, with the publication of Nicholas Stargardt’s \textit{Witnesses of War: Children’s Lives under the Nazis}, did the field of Holocaust studies see its first synthesis of the experiences of Jewish and non-Jewish children. Unlike previous works, Stargardt’s inclusion of testimonies from non-German children in his study, such as Catholic Poles, greatly expanded our understanding of children's’ roles during the Holocaust. Indeed, Stargardt’s side-by-side comparison of variety of children, from German-Jews to Polish non-Jews, reflected the historical reality that Jewish and non-Jewish children in Central Europe lived together for hundreds of years. They attended the same schools and they played the same after-school games. Stargardt, in following Dwork’s criticism of the notion that children were “powerless” in the face of mass extermination, emphasized that “children were neither just the mute and traumatized witnesses to this war, nor merely its innocent victims. They also lived in the war, played and fell in love during the war; the war invaded their imaginations and the war raged inside them.”\textsuperscript{13} Children didn’t just “witness” the violence, they were integral parts of it.

Stargardt’s analysis also took on an added, transnational dimension. Eschewing the national boundaries that have traditionally defined Holocaust research, Stargardt followed the experiences

\textsuperscript{12} See page fifteen for a discussion of the use of oral histories in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{13} Stargardt, \textit{Witnesses of War}, 19.
of children from a small town in Thuringia to the Łódź ghetto.14 While the experiences of
German children could be dichotomized into those who were Jewish and non-Jewish, Stargardt
complicated this analysis by introducing the experiences of children outside of Germany’s
historical borders. This synthesis of the stories of both Jewish and non-Jewish children is his
greatest contribution to the scholarly literature.

The past decade has seen the appearance of additional works which have built upon the
studies undertaken by Dwork and Stargardt. For example, George Eisen has written about the
ways in which games and recreation were used by children as coping mechanisms in a time of
“total war.” Coming to similar conclusions as Nicholas Stargardt, Eisen argued that “play”
during the Holocaust demonstrated the ways in which children constructed “new worlds” as their
own universe was being destroyed.15 This apparent coping mechanism is evidence of the fact that
children responded to the onset of the so-called “Final Solution” in vastly different ways than
their parents.16

The emphasis on “play” in the ability of children to cope with atrocity extended all the way
into the death camps themselves. At the “family camp” in Birkenau, Jewish children were known
to play a game called “gas chamber” in which children dug a hole and threw rocks down the
opening, representing the pellets of poisonous gas (Zyklon B). As the rocks were thrown,
children would recreate the screams of Jews being murdered in the crematoria just feet away

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14 Thuringia is a German Land, or state, located in the center of modern-day Germany. The Łódź ghetto, located in
what is now Central Poland, was the second-largest ghetto set up by Nazi authorities in East Central Europe, after
the Warsaw ghetto.
15 George Eisen, Children and Play in the Holocaust (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988),
62.
16 The “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” was the Nazi euphemism for the extermination of Europe’s Jews.
There exists testimony to suggest that children were able to “withstand” the horrors of the Nazi camp system. For
from them. Even in these unimaginable circumstances, children used play as a means to gain some semblance of control over their surroundings.

Each of the previously described studies has a different methodological focus. Dwork focuses on the experiences of Jewish children in Germany, Stargardt analyzes the experiences of Jewish and non-Jewish children during the war itself, and Eisen examines how children coped with Nazi rule through the normality of their daily lives. Their works, when read in concert, demonstrate the wide range of actions taken by children under Nazi domination. Even as the Nazi regime began its program of extermination in earnest, children attempted to continue their daily routines to the best of their abilities.

Up to this point, we have seen how the experiences of children during the Holocaust have only been examined in the past couple of decades. This fact is interesting as the testimonies of children in Nazi-occupied territories are the focus of some of the well-known and widely discussed materials in the field of Holocaust studies. The Diary of Anne Frank, which contains Anne’s reflections of her teenage years in hiding during the Nazi-occupation of Amsterdam, is one of the most widely-read Holocaust testimonies in the United States. Similarly, Elie Wiesel’s Night, which documents Elie’s deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau at age sixteen, is read in high school classrooms throughout the United States. The use of these materials calls us to deepen our understanding of childhood in Nazi Germany and the ways in which studying children can enhance our understanding of this history.

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17 Nicholas Stargardt, “The War Games of Children in Nazi Germany,” in Childhood and Violence in the Western Tradition, ed. Laurence Brockliss and Heather Montgomery (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2010), 303. The “family camp” at Auschwitz-Birkenau was a fenced enclosure in the camp used as propaganda for potential Red Cross visits.
This goal demonstrates the significance of “Shattered Childhoods.” In the larger context of the history of atrocity, there is much evidence to suggest that the unique positions which children occupied in society put them in a better position to aid in the survival of their families and communities. Children could interact with the outside world without necessarily being perceived as “dangerous.” In this sense, we can view the importance of examining the experiences of children during the November Pogrom through the question of whether Jewish children reacted to the violence in a different manner than their parents.

In addition to questions surrounding the examination of the November Pogrom from the perspective of children, major scholarly debates exist surrounding the role of the Pogrom in the Nazis’ plan to exterminate the Jewish population of Europe. This debate is central to the current study as it can shed light on whether the Nazi state actively considered children to be targets of the violence. The primary question in this discussion is whether the Pogrom was a turning point in the Nazi regime’s plan to murder European Jews. Alan Steinweis, who has written extensively on the November Pogrom, has argued that the mass destruction did not mark a radical departure from previous antisemitic violence, such as the Rhine-Ruhr violence in March 1933. Similarly, Saul Friedländer called for historians to further contextualize the nationwide violence of November 1938 within the broader antisemitic violence that characterized the prior summer. Friedländer stated that “the anti-Jewish violence of the early summer of 1938 had not

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19 For a series of broad case studies of this phenomena, see Laurence Brockliss and Heather Montgomery, *Childhood and Violence in Western Tradition* (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2010).
20 This question is part of a far larger debate concerning the origins of the Nazis’ plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe. Some argue that this plan originated as early as 1919 while others believe the decision occurred in Fall 1941. For an overview of this tangential debate, see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2015).
21 Alan E. Steinweis, *Kristallnacht 1938* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 11. The Rhine-Ruhr violence was a wave of antisemitic attacks carried out by the Nazi Party’s paramilitary force, the SA, in March 1933. While the attacks began in the Rhineland, they quickly spread to Berlin, Frankfurt, and the southwest of Germany. However, these attacks were not nearly as coordinated as the November Pogrom.
entirely died down; A synagogue had been set on fire in Munich on June 9, and another in Nuremberg on August 10. While this evidence demonstrates that the Nazi state targeted Jews prior to November 1938, events such as the Rhine-Ruhr violence were not nearly as coordinated and widespread as the November Pogrom.

Steinweis’ and Friedländer’s points are well taken. The November Pogrom is often touted, especially in popular discussion, as the moment when the Nazi’s rhetorical antisemitism took on the form of physical violence. However, it is important not to undermine the role that the Pogrom played in “testing the waters” for future physical violence against Germany’s Jews. The actions of non-Jewish citizens during the Pogrom demonstrated that ordinary Germans were not willing to actively protest the destruction of German-Jewish communities. The shocking indifference of Germans to their Jewish neighbors, many of whom had lived integrated lives within German communities for hundreds of years, demonstrated to the Nazi state that the radicalization of antisemitic violence would at least be tacitly supported by large portions of the civilian population. Steinweis’ and Friedländer’s conclusion must be read in concert with this observation.

The historiographical debate surrounding the exact nature of the Pogrom also calls into question that precise nature of popular participation during the violence. As with other debates in this field, the question of whether the Pogrom was a widely-supported action reflects larger

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23 This was especially important after knowledge of the Nazi program of murdering Germans with mental and physical disabilities, Aktion T4, became public in 1940. Unlike when they discovered that their Jewish neighbors were being murdered, Germans publicly denounced the T4 killings.
24 Throughout this thesis, I will refer to the “radicalization” of Nazi antisemitic policy. This theory, promulgated by historian Hans Mommsen, contends that the decision to exterminate Europe’s Jews resulted from the continual power struggles and ever-worsening ideological extremism within the Nazi bureaucracy. See “Der Nationalsozialismus. Kumulative Radikalisierung und Selbstzerstörung des Regimes”, in Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon, Bd.16 (Mannheim, Germany, 1976), 785–90.
debates concerning the role of the German population in the implementation of the “Final Solution.” Building upon his belief that the November Pogrom was not an aberration from physical violence against Jews in Nazi Germany, Steinweis posited that the Pogrom was initiated from below. In recent years this position has become far less popular in the scholarly literature. While many early historians originally agreed with Steinweis that the violence was a “popular uprising” by ordinary Germans targeting their Jewish neighbors, recent scholarship has reversed this trend. Historians such as Peter Fritzsche contend that “the pogrom was not the spontaneous response of outraged Nazis and other Germans to the assassination…Hitler and Goebbels ordered the destruction of synagogues and the arrest of thousands of Jewish men as soon as they learned that vom Rath had died.” This observation is supported by the orders issued by the highest levels of the German government to local party leaders.

Historians have also found evidence to undergird this position through the actions of Nazi leaders themselves. Richard Evans argues that Hitler and Goebbels staged the moment when they were notified about vom Rath’s death. The public notification occurred at a gathering in Munich at nine o’clock on November 9, but Hitler and Goebbels were told that vom Rath died during the late afternoon. In this sense, much of the recent literature has correctly rectified the flawed conclusion that the November Pogrom was a popular uprising of the German population. The mass violence was a well-organized act that involved all levels of government. In line with

25 For more information, see Peter Longerich, Davon haben wir nichts gewusst! Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945 (Munich, Germany: Siedler, 2006).
26 Steinweis, Kristallnacht 1938, 6.
27 Peter Fritzsche, Life and Death in the Third Reich (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 134.
28 See footnote three which describes the order from Reinhard Heydrich to local Nazi party leaders providing instructions for the Pogrom.
this conclusion, this thesis seeks to address the question of how the German state actively targeted Jewish children during the violence.

The “top-down nature of the violence is also supported by foreign correspondence and non-German sources. For example, a diplomatic note from the American consulate in Stuttgart to the U.S. State Department on November 15 corroborated this conclusion by stating that fire trucks were on standby prior to the burning of synagogues in order to prevent destruction to German property. The strict limits of the November Pogrom, such as the prohibition of damage to all non-Jewish property, demonstrated that the violence was at least partially coordinated by the Nazi government and was not, contrary to the findings of scholars such as Steinweis, a product of popular frustration with Germany’s Jewish population.

Despite the initiation of the Pogrom by government officials, it is still worth studying ordinary people’s responses to the violence, as such an analysis can reveal how government policy affected individuals on the micro-level. Indeed, it is here where the reader can best view the significance of this thesis. For years historians have examined documentation that demonstrates how the Pogrom was a nationwide, coordinated wave of violence against German Jewry. What we do not know, however, is how these actions affected Jewish children on the individual level. This thesis seeks to connect the micro and macro-level analyses of the November Pogrom through the lens of a largely understudied portion of the population: children.

The works cited above are just a few examples of the abundance of studies surrounding the November Pogrom. However, a history of the November Pogrom from the perspective of children has yet to be written. When discussing the effects of the Holocaust on Europe’s Jewish

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population, we often cite the statistic of six million victims; however, this number wholly fails to encapsulate that each and every one of these individuals had a life before their deaths.31 Jewish life in Europe did not begin with mass murder. A study of the experiences of children during November Pogrom will not only bring to light children’s ways of coping with the violence, but it will also reveal how the unique position of children in society shaped the ability of their families and communities to survive in the face of incomprehensible violence.

**Source Material**

Drawing on this rich historiography and largely underutilized sources at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the USC Shoah Foundation, and the Leo Baeck Institute, this thesis argues that children took advantage of their perceived powerlessness in society to aid their families during the violence. Before and after the November Pogrom, Jewish children were not isolated in their own religious community; they created strong bonds with their non-Jewish peers and only in 1939, when the Nazi state began the formal separation of Jews from the “people’s community,” did friendships rapidly break down. During the Pogrom itself, children took on new and varied roles in the face of the transformation of family dynamics. Indeed, children’s perceived powerlessness aided in their attempts to secure the safety of family and property.

When discussing the role of children during times of mass violence, many of the studies previously mentioned have not drawn distinctions between children of different ages. However, children often responded in vastly different ways depending on their age. During the Pogrom itself, six-year-old children reacted far differently than their sixteen-year-old siblings. In order to account for this important difference, this study attempts to contextualize the specific testimonies

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31 Recent studies have shown that the actual number is likely closer to 5.3 million.
of children depending on their age. For example, when analyzing the experiences of younger children, I attempt to integrate their testimonies with reflections on their surroundings, such as their interactions with their non-Jewish peers in primary school. On the other hand, when examining the experiences of older youths, this study focuses on discerning how the November Pogrom compelled them to take on additional and unexpected familial responsibilities.

More specifically, there are three main sources used in this thesis: unpublished testimonies and oral histories, published memoirs, and government-sponsored propaganda materials. The unpublished memoirs used in this thesis were secured from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. As the majority of these memoirs were written decades after the November Pogrom, the passage of time likely colored the recollections of survivors. Additionally, the fact that the November Pogrom is often held up in popular culture as a major turning point in Nazi antisemitic policy likely influenced how survivors have narrated the event and the weight they give to this moment in recollections of their time in Nazi Germany. In this sense, this thesis is heavily centered on the question of how periods of violence are remembered by children as they age. The memories that adults have of their experiences from decades past are framed by their experiences over their lifetime. This study directly engages this issue by inflecting its argument to include the qualification that the memories expressed by survivors are their reflections of events from decades prior.

The written testimonies cited in this study are also constricted by the fact that many German-Jewish children failed to secure passage from Germany prior to the outbreak of World War II. Thus, the experiences included in the following three chapters can only be examined from the viewpoint of Jewish children who escaped Nazi Germany. However, the use of survivor
testimony is absolutely crucial to any historical analysis of the Holocaust. Due to the murder of two-thirds of Europe’s Jewish population, survivor accounts are some of the only sources we have to gain insight into life under Nazi rule. While imperfect, the testimonies of child survivors allow us to answer questions we couldn't otherwise answer at all. This thesis relies on these testimonies to form the core of its argument.

This study also relies on video-recorded oral histories, which provide their own set of methodological difficulties. Many of the oral histories used in this thesis were recorded in the 1990s, almost fifty years after the end of the Holocaust. In line with this study’s emphasis on the crucial connection between memory and history, the following chapters attempt to link these testimonies with government documents and secondary sources in order to confirm the accounts of German-Jewish children. Oral histories are also advantageous as they allow us to examine the emotion and personal narrative behind a given testimony. As we will see below, survivors often emphasized specific memories of the Pogrom based on their level of emotional attachment. This approach provides a more personal account of the November Pogrom from the perspective of child survivors.

Finally, the last category of sources used in this thesis was government-sponsored propaganda. Unlike personal testimonies, these materials can be analyzed to discern the means by which the Nazi state attempted to indoctrinate children to accept their worldview. When examining the daily lives of German children prior to the November Pogrom, these materials are essential in studying the ideological forces which assaulted children on a daily basis, both inside and outside of the classroom. When read in concert with personal testimonies, propaganda materials in the

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form of classroom lessons and children’s literature can expand our view of ordinary children’s lives in Nazi Germany.

This thesis begins with an overview of children’s daily lives in Nazi Germany in the immediate years preceding the November Pogrom. Chapter one pays special attention to the government-sponsored policy of ideological indoctrination of children and the ways in which these materials affected the lives of German-Jewish children. This chapter also examines the interactions between Jewish and non-Jewish children and the manner by which Jewish children interacted with their friends in the weeks and months prior to the onset of the Pogrom in November 1938.

The heart of this study is chapter two, which analyzes the Pogrom itself through the eyes of German-Jewish children. It is in this chapter that this thesis examines the variety of roles that Jewish children assumed during this nationwide wave of mass violence. Even as their families were torn apart and their homes destroyed in front of their eyes, German-Jewish children actively aided in the effort to secure the safety of their families. This chapter also brings attention to evidence which suggests that Jewish children were actively targeted during the violence. While this evidence is fragmentary, it does shed light on the variety of initiatives taken by some local officials during the Pogrom.

The final chapter of this thesis examines life for Jewish children following the November Pogrom and argues that the violence was a crucial, albeit provisionary turning point in the ability of Jewish children to continue their daily lives in Nazi Germany. In the days following the Pogrom, Jewish children were expelled from public schools and their friendships were further strained. These measures were certainly exacerbated by the Pogrom, but they were not a radical
departure from Jewish daily life in the preceding years. This chapter then turns its attention to the responses of Jewish families to the Pogrom, specifically emigration from the only home German-Jewish children had ever known. This thesis ends with concluding considerations, with a focus on suggestions for future research, and reflections on the importance of integrating children within their larger communities when writing on the Holocaust.
Chapter I
Indoctrination and Assimilation: Daily Life Before the Violence

“We call the youth of the world! We call it to a battle for the freedom of humanity. The end of the Jewish parasite of the peoples will forever free the world from...the 'poodle-pug-dachshund-pinscher’ in human form!”33 - A German Children’s Book

For Ruth Oppenheim, an eight-year-old Jewish girl in 1936, school was far more than a place of education and camaraderie. As a resident of Werne, a town in the traditionally Catholic Unna district, Ruth attended the local public school. She played with her friends after school and often looked forward to attending classes. That is, until the education ministry replaced her teacher. Ruth’s new classroom teacher, an ideologue who “would expound on Jewish crimes and Jewish traits,” often embarrassed Ruth in front of her classmates. Ruth recalled being confused by this perspective. She couldn’t understand why her teacher called Jews “dirty.” After all, according to Ruth, “I wondered whether they didn’t know that we were one of the few families in town with modern plumbing.”34

Ruth’s pained childhood memories of humiliation and ostracism reflected the human impact of the Nazi party's ambition to denigrate and racialize German Jews in the period from 1933, when Hitler became chancellor of Germany, to the November Pogrom of 1938. These antisemitic policies intruded on all aspects of daily life, including, as Ruth recalled, the classroom and playtime. At the time of the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, approximately 117,000 Jewish

33 Ernst Hie mer, Der Pudelmopsdackelpinscher (Nuremberg, Germany: Der Stürmer-Buchverlag, 1940), 48. “Darum rufen wir heute die Jugend der Welt! Wir rufen sie zum Kampfe um die Freiheit der Menschheit. Der Untergang des jüdischen Völkerschmarotzers wird die Welt für immer befreien von 'Drohnen', 'Heuschrecken', 'Wanzen', 'Hyänen', 'Giftschlangen', 'Bazillen' und ‘Pudelmopsdackelpinschern’ in Menschengestalt!” The 1940 version is a reprint of an earlier text. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
children and youths between the ages of six and twenty-five lived in Germany. Of this sizable population, 59,000 were under the age of sixteen.\(^{35}\)

However, it was only in September 1935 when the Nazi state enacted its most well-known antisemitic edicts. During the seventh annual Nuremberg party rally, Adolf Hitler and his supporters enacted the “Nuremberg Laws” which codified the principle of racial antisemitism in the Third Reich. The laws stripped German Jews of their citizenship and reduced them to a status of “state citizenship” (Staatsbürgerschaft), a condition that connoted being a subject rather than a full citizen.\(^{36}\) These laws extended to the entirety of Germany’s Jewish population, including children.

On the eve of the November Pogrom, the power of the Nazi regime was at its highest point and antisemitic ideology had already permeated the traditional structures of children's lives, such as schools and youth organizations. The Pogrom itself marked a crucial turning point in Jewish children's daily lives, as it represented the end of their family life as they knew it, due to the arrest of their fathers and the destruction of their homes. In order to understand this transition, it is essential to examine the daily lives of children in Germany prior to the outbreak of the November Pogrom.

The November Pogrom signaled a dramatic and violent rupture for Jewish children, but that rupture, as the laws indicated, was an exclamation point on a process of dehumanization and alienation from German civic life which had commenced earlier in the decade. In order to view this process from the perspective of German children, this chapter seeks to examine children’s lives prior to the Pogrom in three realms: the classroom, youth organizations, and children’s

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\(^{36}\) Patricia Heberer, *Children During the Holocaust* (Plymouth, UK: AltaMira Press, 2011), 12.
literature. When read in concert with each other, these three units of analysis will provide a window into the experiences of both Jewish and non-Jewish children in Nazi Germany.

**Life Inside the Classroom**

In Nazi Germany, as in many modern nations, the core of children’s lives revolved around education and schooling. Prior to the ascendancy of the Nazi party in January 1933, school provided a site for interactions across religions and cultures. In the waning days of the Weimar Republic in 1932, 86% of Jewish children attended German public schools.\(^{37}\) However, between 1933 and 1938, Jewish children began to withdraw from public schools in favor of privately-funded Jewish schools. While this divide grew during the early years of the National Socialist regime, 40% of Jewish students between the ages of six and fourteen remained in public schools until their expulsion in November 1938.\(^{38}\)

An examination of this 40% reveals the events that marked the daily lives of many Jewish children in the days just prior to the November Pogrom. As students in German schools, Jewish children were forced to work with the same classroom materials that the Nazi regime, through education minister Bernard Rust, demanded be taught in primary and secondary schools.\(^{39}\) Jewish children found themselves in classrooms in which teaching materials sought to indoctrinate so-called “Aryan children” into believing that Jews were animals and criminals. The following analysis is centered in this classroom setting.

With this framework in place, it is also important to note the strict limitations placed on Jewish enrollment in public schools. In 1933, the newly-installed Nazi government enacted the

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\(^{38}\) Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 103.

\(^{39}\) For more on Bernhard Rust, see Anne C. Nagel, *Hitlers Bildungsreformer: Das Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung 1934-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2012).
“Law Against the Overcrowding of German Schools,” which established a limit of 1.5% total enrollment of Jewish children in any individual public school. Where Jews made up more than 5% of the population, the quota was raised to a maximum of 5%.\textsuperscript{40} Even in the earliest months of the Nazi regime, Jewish children were primary targets in the process of purging the German Volk under the fictional guidelines of “racial hygiene.”

As the Nazi regime sought to promulgate a single, cohesive ideology to the youth of Germany, the experiences of Jewish students in public school classrooms can be partially gleaned from the state-sponsored education policy implemented throughout Germany. This policy centered around four “iron pillars:” race, military training, leadership, and religion.\textsuperscript{41} When taught in tandem, these four elements were intended to transcend notions of individual development in order to harness the physical and mental powers of youth for service to the “people’s community,” or \textit{Volksgemeinschaft}.\textsuperscript{42} In this sense, Nazi education policy focused more on the development of the “German race” than the talents of individual students. For the thousands of Jewish students in German public schools, this policy was incredibly harmful.

The first pillar in Nazi education policy, race, harkened back to the core of Nazi ideology. As conceptualized by Nazi party ideologues and policymakers, human existence could be defined as a racial struggle between the “Aryan and Nordic races,” such as ethnic Germans, and “lower races,” such as Jews. This fictional hierarchy of races, when fused with the notion that purity of blood was central to human existence, was the definition of “race” in German classrooms.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41} “What Schools and Parents Need to Know About the Goals of National Socialist Education,” translated and excerpted by Randall Bytwerk from “Die Erziehungsgrundsätze des neuen Deutschlands,” \textit{Frauen-Warte}, #22 (1936/37) on https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/frau01.htm.
\textsuperscript{42} Lisa Pine, \textit{Education in Nazi Germany} (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 41.
Indeed, one can even read Ruth’s testimony through this definition. Her teacher’s description of “dirty Jewish traits” can be directly linked to the Nazi conceptualization of race inside of German classrooms.

This definition had serious implications for Jewish students. As defined in one propaganda publication targeting German mothers, “national socialist education” was, “the thinking of the German people, in understanding German traditions, in awakening the pure, uncorrupted, and honest people’s consciousness, the sense of belonging to the people. Only a pure member of the German race can have such an understanding of his people.” 44 Jewish children did not fit this definition, as the regime did not consider them to be “pure members of the German race.” This conceptualization of race led to the wholesale exclusion of German-Jewish children from education policy inside German classrooms. This question of race is core to understanding the experiences of Jewish children who attended German public schools until the outbreak of the November Pogrom. As one prominent Nazi thinker stated, “A group of living creatures is a race when its individual members share the same appearance and genetic inheritance” 45 The Nazis definition of race inside German classrooms clearly excluded Jewish children.

Additionally, one must not discount the effect that racial indoctrination had on non-Jewish children inside of the classroom. As their teachers began introducing antisemitism in class lessons, non-Jewish children began accepting the government-promulgated ideology. In one Berlin elementary school, in which approximately 50% of the student body was Jewish, non-Jewish children brought pails of soap and water to school in order to wash the seats where

the Jewish children had sat. This policy of indoctrination, which continued to radicalize throughout the 1930s, sought to ostracize Jewish children from environments which were traditionally locations of interreligious interactions.

Classroom teachers were not the only beacons of ideological indoctrination. This racist ideology was also infused into the textbooks and classroom materials used by students in German schools. One such pamphlet designed for secondary schools taught students that the German race must fight against the Jewish race because “the goal of the Jew is to make himself the ruler of humanity. Wherever he comes, he destroys works of culture. He is not a creative spirit, rather a destructive spirit.” The pamphlet connected the “destructive spirit of Jewry” with the notion that Jews undermined the German people during the waning days of World War I, in what is popularly known as the “stab-in-the-back” theory. This theory appealed to many Germany schoolchildren who had relatives that fought in World War I.

The “racial question” in educational institutions often took on a level of vitriolic rhetoric that implied that the German people were in a struggle for the soul of humanity. In “The Poisonous Mushroom” (Der Giftpilz), a commonly read children’s book published in 1938, the author stated that, “German youth must learn to recognize the Jewish poison mushroom. They must learn what a danger the Jew is for the German folk and for the whole world. They must learn that the Jewish problem involves the destiny of us all. The Jew… is the devil in human form (emphasis mine).”

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46 Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 96.
47 May, Deutscher National-Katechismus, 23.” Das Ziel des Juden ist es, sich zum Beherrscher der Menschen zu machen. Wohin er kommt, dort zertrümmert er die Werke der Kultur. Er ist kein schöpferischen Geist, sonder ein zersetzender Geist.”
48 It should also be noted that many German Jews fought for the German Empire in World War I. For a particularly well written study that does not write this history in the shadow of the Holocaust, see Tim Grady, Deadly Legacy: German Jews and the Great War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).
49 Ernst Hiemer, Der Giftpilz (Nuremberg, Stürmerverlag, 1938), 5. “Deutsche müssen lernen, den jüdischen Giftpilz zu erkennen. Sie müssen die Gefahr erkennen, sie der Jude für das deutsche Volk und die ganze Welt ist. Sie müssen lernen, dass die Judenfrage uns alle angeht...der Jude [ist] der Teufel in Menschengestalt!”
The comparison of Jews to the devil invoked a theological struggle that was likely very familiar to German children.\textsuperscript{50} By designing a world in which Jews were akin to the devil, the Nazi regime could paint them as an existential threat to the future of the German people.

While the “racial question” in German classrooms largely centered around Jews, it also involved other groups whom the Nazi state considered to be of a “lesser race.” In particular, classroom materials discussed the question of sexual relations between different races, citing the supposed rape of German women by French colonial troops from Africa during the 1923 French occupation of the Rhineland.\textsuperscript{51} This sexualized rhetoric only further indoctrinated non-Jewish German students into accepting the Nazi Weltanschauung, or worldview, through the implication that lower races would violate the honor of so-called “Aryan” women. Many German children, both Jewish and non-Jewish, worked closely with these materials during their school lives.

These antisemitic materials were often influenced by the highest levels of the Nazi state. In one teaching manual intended for classroom instructors, the author included a quotation from Adolf Hitler’s “My Struggle” (Mein Kampf), which stated, “Racial mixing, and the resulting decline in racial quality, is the single cause of death of ancient cultures; people do not perish because of lost wars, but rather because of the loss of the strength to resist that comes only from pure blood.”\textsuperscript{52} Even though this statement from the leader of the Nazi state was rife with historical assumptions and utterly lacked any evidence to support the theory that racial mixing

\textsuperscript{50} The notion that Jews are the children of the devil stems from one interpretation of the Gospel of John 8:44, “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

\textsuperscript{51} May, Deutscher National-Katechismus, 23. Hundreds of children resulted from sexual relations, many of which were consensual, between French colonial soldiers and German women in the Rhineland. This later presented a serious problem for the “racially conscious Nazi regime.” See Reiner Pommerin, “The Fate of Mixed Blood Children in Germany,” German Studies Review 5, no. 3 (October 1982): 315-323.

\textsuperscript{52} Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 324.
leads to death, it does shed light on how the highest echelons of the German state conceptualized race.

The use of teacher's manuals to indoctrinate instructors and students alike was not limited to statements by the German leader. One manual intended for grades four through seven stated:

Persons with hereditary illnesses have inherited their trouble from their ancestors and are, therefore, innocent. The guilty are those people who passed their blood on to their descendants. The person who is sterilized, therefore, is not the victim of state measures as evil-minded opponents of National Socialism claim, but rather the victim of his genetically burdened ancestors.53

This fascinating excerpt reveals insight into the twisted logic behind notions of “racial hygiene” in the German classroom. Nazi education policy supported the argument that the forced sterilization of “undesirables” was not the fault of the state, but that of one’s ancestors.54 This philosophy of blaming victims was one taught to students in primary and secondary schools throughout the German state, and it clearly attempted to demonstrate that constructed racial hierarchies had existed for centuries.

In addition to notions of “racial purity” and eugenics, the importance of military training and physical education loomed large in German classrooms prior to the outbreak of the November Pogrom. This emphasis on “military virtues” stemmed from the need for “soldiers who are healthy, strong, trained energetic, and able to bear hardships.”55 Through this lens we can see how the German classroom, under Nazi domination, acted as a center for both ideological

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54 Many scholars contend that sterilization of those with mental and physical handicaps in the late 1930s served as a key marker in the path towards mass extermination. For more information, see “Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses. [Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring]” However, sterilization of those with mental disabilities was a common practice in many other nations, such as the United States. See See Buck v. Bell, 274 U.S. 200, (May 2, 1927).

indoctrination and military training. Even as they were sitting next to their Jewish peers, non-Jewish children assimilated this ideology and began their transformation into ideological soldiers designed to support the Nazi state without question.

The emphasis on military training connected to the larger Nazi ideology concerning the central role of the German people in world history. One booklet designed for use in secondary school told students that “you belong to the German people just as every part of your body belongs to you. You are a link in a great chain, a part of the whole. Alone, you are nothing, but when you live for your people you are everything. Your people’s destiny is your destiny.”

When taught inside of the classroom, this concept presented contradictory implications. On one hand, the Nazi state attempted to convince its youth population that the individual was meaningless in the face of the entire German Volk. However, this community of supposedly “pure Germans” excluded the Jewish students who worked with these materials in school. Even before the November Pogrom, Jewish children faced increasing levels of marginalization in their daily lives.

The third tenet of National Socialist education policy was leadership. Materials such as story books were crucial in conveying notions of proper leadership to German children. One such book stated, “I want to have a brown shirt and fight for Adolf Hitler, says Heini - I want to be a German girl and pray and work for Germany, says Lene.” Perhaps the greatest insight from this specific excerpt was the sharp gender-based distinction utilized by German schools in the

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57 “You are a German Child,” trans. and excerpted by Bytwerk from Otto Zimmermann, *Hand in Hand fürs Vaterland*, 2nd ed. (Braunschweig: Verlag Georg Westermann, 1936) on https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/textbook05.htm. Page numbers were not included in the translation.
indoctrination of boys and girls. The male leadership role, as embodied by Heini, is one that was closely connected to military training. Boys trained to be soldiers and to fight for their leader, Adolf Hitler. German girls, on the other hand were to focus on the home and their faith.58

This gendered distinction did not supersede the most important task for any German child: unqualified loyalty to Hitler. “Only he who has learned to obey can lead,” stated one publication which explained education policy to German parents.59 Once again, here we can see a sharp distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish children in German classrooms. Even as non-Jewish children were being heavily pressured into accepting the notion that questioning the will of their superiors is absolutely unacceptable, Jewish children were told that these lessons had no applicability to them as Jewish students should not be in German schools at all. This confusion marked the daily lives of many Jewish children who remained in public schools until November 1938.

The final element of Nazi education policy was devotion to one’s faith. In classrooms filled with both Jewish and non-Jewish children, state-sponsored Christian education created a sharp divide between the two groups. Unsurprisingly, the classical theory of Jewish deicide loomed large in antisemitic literature used in German classrooms.60 One such book claimed that “the man who hangs on the cross was one of the greatest enemies of Jews of all time. He knew the Jews in all their corruption and meanness…He [Jesus of Nazareth] called the Jews: Killers of men from the beginning…He further said to the Jews: Your father is the Devil [implying that the Jews

58 The government-desired role of women in Nazi Germany is often defined by the phrase “Kinder, Küche, Kirche” [Children, Church, Kitchen].
60 This theory contends that Jews were responsible for (and might have physically killed) Jesus of Nazareth, who is considered to be the “Messiah” by Christians.
descend from the Devil.” By appealing to traditional antisemitic tropes, the Nazi regime presented their new, racialized form of antisemitism as a logical implication of the Jews’ supposed murder of Jesus of Nazareth, even as Jewish children were sitting in the classroom.

The use of religion as a tool to indoctrinate students did not come without its contradictions. Even as traditional Christian theology was used as justification to persecute German Jews, classroom materials also rebuked notions of “equality” in Roman Catholic theology. One handbook distributed to students claimed that, “The Christian church, above all the Roman Catholic Church, rejects racial thinking by claiming that ‘All men are equal before God.’ All of the Christian faith, be they Jew, a Negro from the jungle, or white, are better and more valuable to it than a German who is not a Christian. Saving faith is the only bond.” Aside from the anticlerical sentiments present in this material, the core message of this student handbook is one of “racial purity.” In the Nazi mindset, a “Jew” or a “Negro from the jungle” might be a Christian, but their faith did not change the fact that they were not “racially pure.” It was race, not religion, that delineated classroom education in German public schools.

When combined, the four tenets of Nazi education policy drastically shaped how Jewish children viewed school within the context of their everyday lives. Marianne Elsey, a Jewish child living in Berlin, noted that the walk to and from school was the worst part of her day, as she had

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61 Ernst Hiemer, Der Giftpilz (Nuremberg, Stürmerverlag, 1938), 35. “Der an den Kreuz hängt, war einer der größten Feinde der Juden aller Zeiten. Er kannte die Juden in all ihrer Verdorbenheit und Schäbigkeit...Er nannte sie: Möder der Menschen von Anfang an; weil sie seit Anfang ihrer Entstehung mordeten...Er sagte zu ihnen, dass ihr Vater der Teufel sei! Wisst ihr was das, Kinder, heißt?”

62 Until the publication of Nostra Aetate during the Second Vatican Council in 1965, the Roman Catholic Church had never forcefully denounced the accusation of deicide against Jews.

to think about the offensive and frightening materials which often led to her “being bullied.”\textsuperscript{64} Marianne’s experience going to school in Germany’s capital reflects the atmosphere in which Jewish children lived during the years that immediately preceded the November Pogrom. From Marianne’s perspective, the racist materials used in German public schools affected her life outside of school. Walking to classes became a task filled with fear. This fact demonstrated the pervasive nature of Nazi ideology as it applied to children.

The effect that these policies had on Jewish children could be seen in other regions of Germany. For instance, one unnamed writer in Hamburg described her nephew’s reaction to the new conditions at school. The writer recalled that “[her nephew] used to greet us when he came home from school with ‘Heil Hitler.’ He continued to do it, even if forbidden, declaring that he did not want to be a Jew and that he did not believe in being one.”\textsuperscript{65} Many Jewish children internalized this perceived sense of inferiority and sought to identify with their non-Jewish friends. It is only through an examination of Nazi education policy itself where we can see how antisemitic ideology affected Jewish children on the individual level.

For Jewish children in Germany who were enrolled in German schools, classrooms served as centers of ideological indoctrination. The racist propaganda taught in these classrooms, as mandated by the Nazi state, assaulted them on a daily basis and began to influence the course of their ideological development. For the regime, the process of “modernizing” the German school system ensured the regime’s centralization of control over education policy.\textsuperscript{66} As the alienation and embarrassment of Jewish children in classrooms continued throughout the mid-1930s, more

\textsuperscript{64} Marianne Elsey, “Without Bitterness,” p. 16, ME 989. Leo Baeck Institute, New York.
\textsuperscript{65} As quoted in Marion Kaplan, “The School Lives of Jewish Children and Youth in the Third Reich,” Jewish History 11, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 43.
\textsuperscript{66} Pine, Education in Nazi Germany, 31.
and more parents decided to place their children in private, Jewish schools.\(^6\) This difficult decision only compounded the separation of Jewish children from their non-Jewish peers and further served the regime’s goals of total separation of the races.

**Youth Organizations as Weapons of Indoctrination**

Life inside the classroom was only one facet of Jewish children’s experiences in Nazi Germany. While Nazi education policy sought to alienate Jewish children from communal environments, Jewish children were not legally separated from their non-Jewish peers until after the Pogrom. However, in recreational organizations, the racist and antisemitic classroom materials used to indoctrinate children continued to influence the actions of German children through the strict segregation of Jewish and non-Jewish children. Indeed, as the Nazi regime solidified their control over the formerly independent apparatus of local and regional education, Jewish children became more and more isolated from their non-Jewish friends. It is in this widening distinction where we can best view how the lives of Jewish children drastically changed and the methods by which Jewish children responded to this radicalizing form of persecution.

Unlike their experiences inside of the classroom, Jewish children in Nazi Germany often found themselves formally excluded from well-known youth organizations in Nazi Germany, such as the Hitler Youth (HJ) and the League of German Girls (BDM).\(^6\) In response to this exclusion, the German-Jewish community supported youth organizations for Jewish children. By 1936, approximately 50,000 Jewish youths between the ages of twelve and twenty-five, 60% of...

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\(^6\) In order to explore the experiences of Jewish children who attended German public schools in depth, this thesis does not include extensive material on Jewish private schools. For more information see Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, particularly pp. 94-106.

\(^6\) HJ is the German acronym for the “Hitler Jugend,” the state-sponsored youth organization for German boys, while BDM is the German acronym for the “Bund Deutscher Mädel,” the organization for German girls.
all young Jews, joined such organizations. The participation of a significant proportion of the Jewish youth population in Nazi Germany in these groups demonstrated the stark separation of Jewish children with so-called “Aryan” children outside of the classroom.

The largest of these organizations was the League of German-Jewish Youths (BdjJ), which provided communal outlets for German-Jewish children during the early years of Nazi rule. To members of this organization, the BdjJ not only provided an outlet from the hostile world surrounding them, but it also gave young Jews a level of confidence to live as Germans while being Jewish. The largest Jewish youth organization in Nazi Germany, even in the mid-1930s, was one that embraced the fusion of Judaism with German life. Even after being refused entry to the youth organizations of their non-Jewish peers, Jewish children sought to maintain their connection to German culture in the months and years prior to the November Pogrom.

This refusal of Jewish children to relinquish their German identity can be seen in public discourse during the 1930s. One newspaper article on the BdjJ stated that “the Bund began with the premise that German Judaism has not ended, and will not end, just because it is compelled to embrace new forms and contents. The young generation has not capitulated just because it has it more difficult than its fathers and grandfathers.” Drawing on the communal history of Jews, one of exclusion and persecution, Jewish children in Germany refused to forsake the only home they had ever known.

There is also evidence to suggest that the exclusion of Jewish children from daily life often depended on the demographics of a specific town or region. Jewish children were more likely to

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70 In German, this group was known as the “Bund deutsch-jüdische Jugend.”
be ostracized in small towns, where non-Jewish children could not “hide” friendships. Often times, it was in these regions where youth organizations took on an increased level of importance, as they sought to create a community of “conscious German Jews.” Yet organizations such as the BdJ were unable to fully fill the void left by the exclusion of Jewish children from the extracurricular activities of their non-Jewish peers. Youth organizations designed for so-called “Aryan children,” such as the HJ and the BDM, openly advocated the wholesale indoctrination of German children with an ideology of hatred directed against their Jewish friends. In order to understand this movement, it is essential to examine the experiences of non-Jewish children in these groups.

From the perspective of Nazi education policy, ideological indoctrination inside of the classroom was just the first phase of their integration into the racialized world of Nazi Germany. Their participation in the Hitler Youth, for boys, and the League of German Girls, for girls, radically altered children’s daily lives and further separated non-Jewish children from their Jewish peers. These massive groups served as the main organizing bodies for political education outside of the classroom, with 5.4 million German children joining the HJ by December 1936.

In a similar fashion to the top-down methods of indoctrination utilized in German classrooms, members of the Hitler Youth assimilated the notion that National Socialist ideology was closely tied to human nature. One booklet for Hitler Youth leaders explained this concept:

The National Socialist worldview is not the result of abstract and convoluted thinking. It is not a theory, but rather is clearly bound to reality. National Socialist thinking comes from experience. It is a worldview based on facts and reality...The most important and

73 Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 95.
74 Sharfman, “The Dilemma of German-Jewish Youths in the Third Reich:” 31.
influential facts in the life of nations are “blood and soil.” He who understands their laws and effects in history can determine the future.\(^76\)

Perhaps the most poignant section of this excerpt is its connection of the “Nazi worldview” with “facts and reality,” clearly linking notions of racial hierarchies to Darwinian biology. As many German children began to internalize this race-based ideology, they began to separate themselves from their Jewish friends. Organizations such as the HJ and the BDM served the dual purpose of “educating” a generation and furthering the ostracization of Jews in the Nazi state.

Additionally, the use of youth organizations to spread antisemitic dogma cannot be separated from the gendered atmosphere of daily life in Nazi Germany. Many German girls sought to join the BDM not because of ideological allegiance to the regime, but rather to have more independence and to go on adventures.\(^77\) The regime capitalized on the desire of girls for more independence by designing the BDM as a center of ideological indoctrination. As German girls began receiving more of their education in Nazified classrooms and in the BDM, the German state continued to separate the education of boys and girls outside of school.

To this end, the BDM began officially introducing Nazi ideology to girls at a slightly younger age than boys in the HJ. One BDM manual first introduced the “racial policies of the Third Reich” at age fourteen, although as we will see below, notions of ‘racial purity’ were introduced far earlier through children’s literature.\(^78\) It is clear, however, that the indoctrination of German girls through the BDM was closely linked to the desire of girls to spend more time with their


\(^77\) Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 48. It is possible that German boys shared the same motivating factors, but this study did not find direct evidence to answer this question.

\(^78\) *Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend*. Trans. and excerpted by Bytwerk.
friends. The Nazi regime hijacked this ordinary impulse in order to condition a generation of German children into accepting their racialized worldview.  

Even when presented to children, Nazi propaganda explained this worldview as an existential struggle. One HJ manual stated, “The German people has direct contact with only one foreign people: Jewry. Thus, for us racial hygiene means a defense against the corruption of our blood and spirit by the Jews.” By presenting Jews as corruptors of ‘Aryan blood’ the regime infused its eugenics-based ideology into the lives of non-Jewish children in Nazi Germany. This concept, that Jews were poisoning the blood of Germans, only contributed to the separation of German children from their Jewish friends. Even before the November Pogrom, state-sponsored racial ideologies were already infecting the bonds between Jewish and non-Jewish children.

For many German children, these organizations served as weapons of indoctrination, even if children did not fully realize their purposes. Hans Mommsen, a former member of the Hitler Youth and an eminent historian of National Socialism, remarked in 2000 that the members of the HJ often “didn’t realize what [they] were singing,” in reference to the antisemitic songs sung during Hitler Youth gatherings. Hans’ reflection speaks to the diversity of motivations of non-Jewish children in joining the HJ. While some were ideologically committed to the cause, children such as Hans did not understand the implications behind the rhetoric they used.

Youth organizations such as the Hitler Youth, the League of German Girls, and the German-Jewish Youth League radically widened the social gap between Jewish and non-Jewish children in Nazi Germany, further contributing to the ostracization of Jewish children from their larger communities. Yet participation in these organizations was only only facet of antisemitism

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79 Bennecke, ed., Vom deutschen Volk und seinem Lebensraum. Trans. and excerpted by Bytwerk.
in the lives of German-Jewish children. We can also see these ideological forces deeply integrated into the children’s literature and fiction of the time.

**“Racial Education” in Children’s Literature**

Children’s literature was the final pillar in the Nazi program to ostracize Jewish children from their non-Jewish friends. Under Nazi control, children’s literature became far more than entertainment for young children; rather, it was a primary tool for indoctrinating German youth with antisemitic beliefs. Key to the use of these stories was their close connection with the Nazi worldview. As Nazi notions of racial hierarchies and traditional children’s literature shared the use of animals and the natural environment, children’s literature became key in convincing non-Jewish children to exclude their Jewish friends.\(^{81}\) An analysis of this literature can shed light on the social forces which shaped the minds of non-Jewish children prior to the November Pogrom.

One such children’s story, geared primarily towards primary school-aged students, related the tale of a siege at a large castle, and the bravery of its defenders. An excerpt of this untitled story stated, “They all sat in the castle, behind high walls of sand. Two cannons faced outward, and the flag fluttered in the wind. But no enemy came which meant that there was no fun! Then Otti shouted: ‘The enemy is already here! Don’t you see him?’ Right, the enemy had softly crept right up to the wall of sand! It was rising against it!”\(^{82}\) Otti’s comments mirrored the idea of the

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\(^{81}\) This worldview was closely connected to Social Darwinist notions of “survival of the fittest” as it related to so-called “racial hierarchies.” There is a separate but substantial literature on the relationship between Social Darwinism and the emergence on new forms of racism antisemitism in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. While this phenomenon can most predominantly be seen in Nazi Germany, it had strong roots in the United States as well. For more information see, James Q. Whitman, *Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

\(^{82}\) “The Enemy,” trans. and excerpted by Bytwerk from *Meine Fibel — Ein Geschichtenbuch für die kleinen Bremer* (Bremen: Fritz Gansberg, 1940) on https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/textbook04.htm. Page numbers were not included in the translation.
“unseen enemy” of the German Jew that was promulgated by the Nazis. They may have assimilated, but according to Nazi ideology, these “hidden Jews” represented an existential threat to the survival of the German people.

In “The Poisonous Mushroom,” the author turned to analogies from the natural world in order to convince readers of German Jews’ “malicious intent:”

Just as it is often hard to tell a toadstool from an edible mushroom, so too it is very hard to recognize the Jews as swindlers and criminals...“Look, Franz,” says his mother in the story, “human beings in this world are like the mushrooms in the forest. There are good mushrooms and there good people. There are poisonous, bad mushrooms and there are bad people.\(^8\)

By comparing German Jews to “bad mushrooms,” Franz’s mother made an unequivocal judgement against German Jews: they are dangerous and “poisonous.” In these works, Jews were portrayed as alien to the German Volk. For many young children, notions of “racial hygiene” might have sounded too complicated and abstract for them to understand. The use of analogies from nature, many of which young children would have been familiar with, allowed the Nazi state to infuse their racialized rhetoric into the minds of non-Jewish children.

The second, major theme present in children’s literature was the assimilation of Jews into German society. Even though most German Jews, including children, were integrated into their communities, the regime defined “Jewish” as a racial category. Thus it was these assimilated Jews, those who could not be distinguished from non-Jews, who represented a particular danger to the “people’s community.” One story explained this fear to children through poetry:

So that the Jew you shan’t recognize
His name turns up in other guise.
Herr Nathan calls himself Jonathan,

\(^8\) Hiemer, Der Giftpilz, 3. “Wie die Giftpilze oft schwer von den guten Pilzen zu unterscheiden sind, so ist es oft sehr schwer, die Juden also Gauner und Verbrecher zu erkennen...Schau, Franz, mit den Menschen auf der Welt ist es genauso wie den Pilzen im Wald. Es gibt gute Pilze und gute Menschen. Es gibt auch giftige, böse Pilze und böse Menschen.”
While Levin becomes Levinson.
Abraham loses two of his “a’s”
And now his name reads simply Brahm--
Others are even more cunning still!
They drop their foreign names at once
And you will find high-sounding names,
Bluehdorn and Siegenreich,
And Veilkenblau and Loewenstein.84

Here we can see a unique aspect of Nazi antisemitism in comparison to previous forms of antisemitic ideology. As the regime held that blood was the key to understanding the “danger” of Jews, those who assimilated and changed their names must be closely watched. For children, these poems provided an easy pathway to adopt this ideology.

Up to this point, we have seen how both nature and blood were central elements in children’s literature in Nazi Germany. By the late 1930s, however, these two concepts were often fused in literature, with “racial purity” being explained through analogies with the natural world. One story compared so-called “Aryans” to bees and Jews to drones in a hive:

We bees are an industrious people. We work our whole lives long. The sun is hardly up and we are awake and searching for honey and pollen. We stop only when it is evening. We have to work hard so that we will be prepared for winter, when there are no flowers or blossoms. We have to work hard so that our children will have something to eat. We have to work hard to preserve our people…The drones are bees too, like us. But they do not help our people, they only harm it…They eat everything that we have collected for our ourselves, our people and our children. They make us poor, and they are absolutely insolent.85

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84 “Jewish Names,” trans. and excerpted by Bytwerk from Elvira Bauer, Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud auf seinem Eid (Nuremberg: Stürmer Verlag, 1936) on https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/fuchs.htm. Page numbers were not included in the translation.
Using nature as a basis for the story, this fable made a clear distinction between the “industrious” bees and the “insolent” drones. The Jews are portrayed as making the “Aryan bees” poor by stealing their food. The continuous exposure of non-Jewish German children to these materials had a significant effect on their interactions with Jewish children, who were thought to be similar to the drones described in this story.

Finally, children’s literature extended into the religious realm, where Jewish traditions were often twisted, and in some cases, invented. In one poignant passage in “The Poisonous Mushroom,” a Jewish girl discusses the Talmud with her rabbi. The rabbi stated that the Talmud included the passage, “Lift up your hands against the Gentiles! Incite the wrath of the Gentiles against each other and pour out anger! Shatter the princes who are enemies to the Jews.” There is no evidence to suggest that the Talmud includes language calling on Jews to commit violent acts against non-Jews, or Gentiles. Yet this rhetoric served the goal of indoctrinating German children into fearing and hating their Jewish peers.

When integrated into the daily lives of non-Jewish children in Nazi Germany, children’s literature served as a ‘racial education.’ Non-Jewish children began to identify their Jewish friends with these pervasive stereotypes, and in concert with the regime’s centralization of power in the realm of education, non-Jewish children were further drawn into the Nazi worldview. Even for young children, many of whom were not yet enrolled in school or a youth organization, the Nazification of children’s literature ensured that the indoctrination of German children began as quickly as possible.

86 Hiemer, Der Giftpilz, 14. “Erhebt eure Hände gegen die Nichtjuden. Hetzt ihren Zorn heraus, und lasst ihn gegen sie selber strömen! Zerschlagt die Prinzen, die Feinde der Juden sind.”
Conclusion

In 1935, Irene Spicker Awret, a fourteen-year-old resident of Berlin, visited her best friend Tutti after school. Tutti explained to Irene that they could no longer be friends as “her father was a magistrate [and] her sister had to think of her fiance’s career.” As she left Tutti’s home, Irene recalled feelings like she was “dropped like the proverbial hot potato.” The excuses provided by Tutti demonstrated the goal of government policy as it related to the interactions between Jewish and non-Jewish children: the complete separation of Jewish and non-Jewish children in German society. While this goal was never fully achieved, the breakdown of friendships such as Irene and Tutti’s occurred throughout Germany in the years prior to the November Pogrom.

In this sense, the centralization of power under the Nazi regime saw a radical transformation of the daily lives of Jewish children in Nazi Germany. Nazi education policy was at least partially successful in weakening the bonds between Jewish children and their peers, even as a sizable portion of Jewish children remained in German public schools. Even before the formal outbreak of physical violence against Germany’s Jewish community, children already felt the psychological effects that ideological indoctrination had on their lives.

In the months and years leading up to the November Pogrom, the Nazi state sought to actively terminate the interactions between Jewish and non-Jewish children. While these antisemitic forces invaded the realms of youth organizations and children’s literature, they were unable to create a sharp divide between German children. As we have seen, a large portion of Jewish children remained in German public schools until November 1938, and children continued to

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87 As quoted in Heberer, Children during the Holocaust, 14.
interact with each other despite education policy which sought to divide them. However, after the November Pogrom, this divide would become impossible to avoid.
Chapter II
The Descent into Madness: Jewish Children During the Pogrom

“It felt like boiling blood turning to that icy chill of fear; fear of death. What are they going to do next?” - Ludwig Bauer, a twelve-year-old Jewish child in Forchheim

On the evening of November 9, 1938, Klaus Loewald, a sixteen-year-old Jewish boy from Cologne, boarded a midnight train bound for Hamburg with his father. As a collector of model trains, Klaus described his excitement for the overnight journey when he stated, “I clearly remember my continuing excitement at being in a position to spend so much time on trains. The overnight journey to Hamburg was a high point because of the intersection, at Osnabrück, of the important East-West and North-South lines; I spent time on the platform while my father tried to sleep.” Klaus’ fascination with travelling to new places was akin to that of many other teenagers his age. However, the Loewalds’ journey was not for pleasure. Just prior to starting their journey, Klaus’ father had learned that his arrest was imminent. The Loewalds were on the run.

The night of November 9, 1938 saw similar attempts to arrest Jewish men and destroy the physical vestiges of Jewish life throughout Germany. By the time Klaus and his father reached Hamburg during the morning of November 10, a nationwide pogrom was underway that resulted in the burning of hundreds of synagogues, the ransacking of 7,000 Jewish businesses, and the imprisonment of one in four German-Jewish men in concentration camps. The actions taken by

88 Ludwig Bauer, “Memoiren von Ludwig Bauer,” p. 5, 2006.46, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C. The author titled the manuscript in German, but he wrote the text of his memoir in both English and German.
91 Martin Gilbert, Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2006), 13. This statistic is widely cited as the main physical effect of the Pogrom, yet popular discussions of the Pogrom consistently center around the destruction of property and “broken glass,” as witnessed by the term “Crystal Night.”
Jewish children during the Pogrom demonstrated the multifaceted roles of children during the mass violence. By examining the November Pogrom through the eyes of German-Jewish children, we can view how children used their perceived powerlessness in society to aid their families withstand the mass brutality. It was the most vulnerable members of society, Jewish children themselves, who played a large role in contributing to the survival of their families in the face of the destruction of German-Jewish communities.

Any children’s history of the Pogrom must draw heavily on personal testimonies and oral histories to explore the individual actions of Jewish children during the Pogrom. More specifically, this section primarily relies on testimony from children who survived the Holocaust. Often times, survivors recalled the events decades after they occurred, and their perception of the Pogrom was likely colored by its prominence in Holocaust historiography. In this sense, this chapter is just as much about how time has affected the memories of survivors as it is about the history of the violence itself.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the ways in which the November Pogrom saw a transformation of family dynamics in that children rapidly took on additional roles and responsibilities to secure the safety of their families. It then continues with its central argument which examines the destruction of Jewish life during the Pogrom through the eyes of Jewish children. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of physical acts of violence against Jewish children. In concert, these three perspectives demonstrate the wide range of children's experiences during the November Pogrom.
Transformation of Family Dynamics

During the period of mass violence which spread across Germany, Klaus Loewald still maintained a sense of excitement from his overnight train journey. We can see similar childhood adventures throughout the night of November 9. At the same time that Klaus was helping his father escape arrest, another child boarded a different train in the German-Polish border town of Stettin. In a 1996 interview, survivor Rita Pototzky, who was living with her grandparents while her parents were on a trip to Berlin, recalled being visited by two plainclothes Gestapo agents during the Pogrom.92 These men informed Rita that her father was wanted by the police. After realizing that she accidentally gave away her father’s current location in Berlin, Rita borrowed train fare from her grandparents and took a late-night train to the capital in order to warn her father. Rita was successful. Due to her warning, her father was able to escape arrest.93

Rita Pototzky’s memory of her dangerous journey during the Pogrom demonstrated the way in which the beginning of the destruction of German-Jewish communities forced Jewish children to openly advocate for the safety of their families. Rather than being protected by her parents, it was thirteen-year-old Rita who traveled through the night to warn her father of the coming danger. Yet Rita’s action, of giving up her parents’ location to the Gestapo, only complicates this analysis as she became both the savior of her family and the informant who almost caused their arrest. This phenomenon could be seen throughout Germany. As Jewish men were prime targets

92 Rita Pototzky, “Video Interview with Rita Pototzky,” interview code 11693, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 1996. The Gestapo were the “secret police” in the Nazi state. They were the main perpetrators of the pogrom, alongside the SA. There isn’t one particular group that spearheaded the implementation of the Pogrom. Evidence demonstrates that local party leaders acted in concert with police forces and regional authorities to target German Jews. This mirrors the later implementation of the extermination process, which drew on multiple elements of the Nazi bureaucracy and military force to murder Europe’s Jewish population. For more information, see Raul Hilberg, Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1992), particularly chapters two through eight.
93 Pototzky, “Video Interview with Rita Pototzky.”
for arrest by the police and paramilitary forces such as the SA, Jewish children began to take on more responsibility in order to secure the safety of their parents and relatives.\(^9\)

The transformation of family roles in the testimony of Rita Pototzky is particularly poignant in how Rita remembered her experiences decades after they occurred. The fact that child survivors specifically recalled that the Pogrom marked a turning point in how they conceptualized their family roles demonstrates the centrality of this change in viewing the Pogrom from the eyes of German-Jewish children.\(^5\) The children themselves remembered a significant disruption in how their families operated. It is through this lens where we can best view the effects of the violence on Jewish children.

In Berlin itself, where the violence was at its peak, Jewish children who could “pass” as gentiles served as a conduit of information for their families. Miriam Litke was an eleven-year-old Jewish girl with fair skin and blue eyes. On the night of November 9, Miriam’s uncle, who owned a furniture store on Kastanienallee, asked her to go down to the store and report what was happening to his shop.\(^6\) While Miriam acknowledged that she initially thought that her uncle’s idea was “ludicrous,” she eventually realized that no other member of her family was able to interact with the general population due to their well-known positions in the Jewish community.\(^7\) During the Pogrom, Miriam inhabited a unique position in her family. Since she

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\(^9\) The SA or Sturmbteilung was the main paramilitary force used by the Nazi state to foment violence and arrest Jewish men during the Pogrom. As the SA rapidly lost its status in the Nazi hierarchy following the “Night of the Long Knives” in 1934, its role in the Pogrom was one of its major acts as an organization within the German bureaucracy. For a recent and exhaustive analysis of the role of the SA, see Daniel Siemens, Stormtroopers: A New History of Hitler’s Brownshirts (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

\(^5\) A tangential question for future research involves how Jewish religious life, such the coming-of-age ceremony known as a “Bar Mitzvah,” affected the pre-Pogrom family dynamics in Jewish households. However, the vast majority of German Jews at the time were assimilated and only 10% identified as Orthodox in 1933. This suggests a limited influence of traditional religious roles on children's lives. See Marion A. Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12.

\(^6\) Kastanienallee is a street in the northern section of Berlin.

\(^7\) As quoted in Gilbert, Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction, 49.
was perceived by others as non-Jewish and could move around the city without suspicion, Miriam’s position allowed her to transmit information to her family even while the Pogrom was in progress.

The ability of Jewish children to use their perceived innocence to their advantage during the Pogrom and its immediate aftermath extended far beyond gathering information; these children became crucial to the economic stability of German-Jewish families. In Hanover, for example, fifteen-year-old Phillippe Storch wrote in a postwar memoir of learning how to drive as his father could not be seen in public for fear of arrest. Since Phillippe's parents feared that the police would confiscate their vehicle if they discovered it was owned by Jews, Philippe was the only member of the family who could drive the car without suspicion. As a child, Philippe could “pass” as a child that did not represent a threat to the perpetrators. He remembered his role as central to the well-being of his extended family.

During the night of November 9, children like Miriam and Philippe experienced the transformation of family dynamics throughout Germany. The German state arrested a quarter of all Jewish men in the course of the Pogrom. As a result, children often had to fill the gap left by their fathers. Many of these responsibilities extended to confronting the perpetrators of the violence. Seventy-year-old Susanna Goldschmitt, originally a native of the Hessian town of Zwingenberg, claimed that as a fourteen-year-old child she confronted the mayor of the town after her father was arrested. Susanna recalled in 1995 that “I went to the mayor across the street in the city hall and I said, “Why did you do this to me? My father was a veteran of the war [World War I]!” [The mayor] picked up his newspaper and said “Look what they [the Jews] did

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to this young man [referring to vom Rath]. That’s why we are doing this to you. He was killed by your kind.” This encounter demonstrated the unexpected ways in which some Jewish children sought to protect their fathers from arrest.

One can imagine this peculiar encounter between a fourteen-year-old child and her town’s mayor. Even more intriguing is that the mayor, himself a mid-level Nazi party official, accused this German child of being complicit in the murder of a German diplomat in Paris. Susanna’s open confrontation with a Nazi party official demonstrated how the Pogrom forced children to take an active role in saving family members. Susanna openly advocated for her father in spite of the risk to herself. The fact that the mayor let Susanna return after this confrontation is evidence that he did not necessarily consider a adolescent Jewish girl to be a major threat.

Susanna’s experience also provides evidence to how German-Jewish children filled certain roles by actively rescuing their fathers from arrest and imprisonment. While Susanna attempted to secure her father’s release after his arrest, other children were successful in aiding their fathers evade capture. In Berlin, Max Kopfstein, a Jewish boy who had just celebrated his fourteenth birthday, described his family’s plan to warn his father of imminent arrest:

Not knowing what the day held in store, I was not allowed to go to school, but Father nevertheless went to work, not before a code - ‘There are guests’ - had been arranged between us to warn him in case the Nazis came to look for him. Mother and I were alone, at home. Some time later, the doorbell rang...There stood two Gestapo agents in civilian clothes, asking to see my father Walter Kopfstein. [My mother] answered that he was in his office, at the same time giving me a sign with her hand behind her back. I went downstairs via the back entrance to our flat, and ran to the public phone booth at the corner of the street, where I phoned my father in his office to say ‘There are guests.”

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99 Susanna Goldschmitt, “Interview with Susanna Goldschmitt,” interview code 5267, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 1995. Ernst vom Rath was a German diplomat in Paris who was shot by Jewish teenager Herschel Grynszpan. This act was used by the Nazi state as the casus belli for the November Pogrom. See page three of this thesis.

100 As quoted in Gilbert, Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction, 43.
Unlike the experiences of children such as Susanna Goldschmitt, Max Kopfstein was an integral element of the plan to save his father. Max’s position as a child allowed him to act as a messenger to warn his father that the Gestapo were going to arrest him. The Gestapo agents’ perception of Max as a harmless child allowed him to secure the safety of his father.

The transformation of family dynamics during the November Pogrom extended beyond children assuming new and unexpected roles. During this outbreak of nationwide violence, Jewish parents lost the ability to protect their children from experiencing the effects of the violence. In Forchheim, twelve-year-old Ludwig Bauer recalled being forced, by the town authorities, to clean up the destroyed synagogue alongside his father. In his postwar memoir, Ludwig stated that “words simply could not describe our thoughts and feelings” as they literally picked up the pieces of their lives.\textsuperscript{101} Ludwig could not be shielded from the violence, even though he was not a main target of the Pogrom. However, his experience does provide a single example to support the scholarly point of view that the November Pogrom was a product of “local initiatives,” as Ludwig’s testimony is not fully echoed by other German-Jewish children.\textsuperscript{102} The sheer amount of testimony related to the lives of children during the Pogrom makes it impossible to definitively characterize Ludwig’s testimony as an exception. In most cases, children primarily suffered through the destruction of their homes and families.

\textsuperscript{101} Ludwig Bauer, “Memoiren von Ludwig Bauer,” p. 5.
\textsuperscript{102} Alan E. Steinweis, \textit{Kristallnacht 1938} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 6. The term “local initiatives,” as it relates to the history of the Holocaust, generally refers to the theory of functionalism in Holocaust historiography. This theory, pioneered by British historian Timothy Mason, argues that the decision to exterminate the Jews of Europe was an outgrowth of the never-ending struggle for power inherent in the Nazi hierarchy coupled with the desire of Nazi leaders to work towards accomplishing the “general will” of Adolf Hitler. In turn, regional leaders in the \textit{Generalgouvernement}, or occupied-Poland, experimented with various solutions to the so-called “Jewish Question,” eventually settling on mass extermination. For more information, see Ian Kershaw, “Improvised Genocide? The Emergence of the ‘Final Solution’ in the Wartheau,” in Ian Kershaw, \textit{Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
The inability of parents to protect their children extended beyond the physical effects of the Pogrom. The psychological consequences of the violence can also be seen in the emotional trauma that the Pogrom inflicted on German-Jewish children. In Munich, fourteen-year-old Edgar Feuchtwanger vividly reflected on the invasion of his bedroom by the Gestapo. Edgar wrote in 2017 that, “I fall asleep at last and have a nightmare: someone’s knocking at our door...The Gestapo are at our apartment….They open the door to my bedroom. Soldiers. In uniform. They turn on the lights. My mother’s in the drawing room. Where’s Papa?...He comes over to me, takes my head in his hands, kisses me. They take him away.” Edgar’s “dream” was, in fact, a description of his memories during the November Pogrom.

The invasion of Edgar’s bedroom by agents of the Gestapo and the arrest of his father demonstrated the ways in which Jewish parents were unable to protect their children from the violence of the November Pogrom. Not only was Edgar’s father arrested and taken away before the child’s eyes, but this entire sequence of events occurred in Edgar’s bedroom. While the transformation of family dynamics had a physical dimension, through the adoption of new responsibilities by Jewish children, we can also see a psychological dimension of the violence in that parents could no longer protect their children from emotional trauma. As Edgar observed, this phenomenon was, quite literally, a nightmare come true.

Similar “nightmares” are prominent in the testimony of adults who lived through the Pogrom during their childhoods. Anne Koppel, writing about her childhood in Cologne following the November Pogrom, stated that the days when her father was imprisoned in Dachau “were a terrific strain.” Anne was responsible for her entire extended family who were gathered in the

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family house while her mother was gone looking for Anne’s father. In the days following the November Pogrom, Anne had to assume the responsibilities which were traditionally her mother’s, such as caring for her extended family’s household needs. The arrest of Jewish fathers, as was the case with Anne’s father, interrupted the daily lives of Jews in Germany by forcing children to accept additional responsibility in the family sphere.

This emotional trauma, which was caused by the mass violence which spread throughout Germany during the night of November 9, permanently altered the worldview of German-Jewish children. Indeed, many Jewish children remained fascinated by the events occurring around them. For thirteen-year-old Paul Safirstein, the “cold, grey November day” could not take away the fact that “[he] still saw the world optimistically.” Paul’s optimistic view echoed the sentiments of Klaus Loewald’s excitement over his train journey. The violence was real, but to children such as Paul and Klaus, the wonder and excitement of new experiences often colored their perception of a major turning point in the radicalization of Nazi racial policy.

The destructive effect that the November Pogrom had on Jewish families marks a crucial moment in the Nazis plan to excise Jews from German society. As Jewish communities faced the reality that they were no longer safe in their own homes, children responded to the violence in unpredictable ways. In their post-war reflections, many survivors recalled their experiences during the Pogrom as transformative moments in their upbringing. As we will see, the physical destruction of Jewish property during the Pogrom only amplified this perception.

104 Anne Koppel, “Citizenship: None,” p. 8, ME 828, Leo Baeck Institute, New York.
The Physical Destruction of Jewish Life

“The innocent stillness of the night was suddenly broken by the sound of shattering glass,” wrote Ludwig Bauer, who continued, “roused from a deep sleep, we realized that the large windows of the synagogue, right below our living quarters, were being smashed by a barrage of rocks!” Ludwig’s recollections of the physical destruction of his home and synagogue represent the most visible symbols of the Pogrom; that is, the burning of synagogues and the destruction of Jewish homes. However, this destruction extended far beyond physical damage. As the tangible vestiges of Jewish life in Germany were eliminated, the breakdown of ordinary life in German-Jewish households accelerated.

By three o’clock in the morning on November 10, the beginning of the physical destruction of German-Jewish communities was well underway. All throughout Germany, families had to face the beginning of the end of Jewish daily life in the Nazi state. In her postwar writings, Anne Koppel remarked that the SA and the SS, “[smashed] everything in sight, including the owners’ heads, they stole everything they could move, they killed canaries and goldfish just for the fun of killing, and they shot cats and dogs full of holes, because they were owned by Jewish children.” Anne’s observation, written in a high school English class after her emigration to the United States, demonstrated the largely arbitrary actions taken by Germans who attacked Jews during the Pogrom. These largely incomprehensible sets of circumstances compelled many children to take an active role in defending their families.

Ludwig Bauer’s experience during the Pogrom demonstrated this experience. During the night of November 9, the streets of Forchheim were filed with violence against Jews. Ludwig

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107 Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 122.
was crouched in a corner of his family’s apartment, in from of his mother, “armed with a flashlight and a butcher knife.”

By protecting his family with a butcher knife, Ludwig took upon the role of protector within his home. “As we saw our lives flashing before us, Ludwig wrote in 2006, “we could only contemplate in painful silence that this would be the end.”

Twelve-year-old Ludwig’s exposure to the violence of the Pogrom forced him to assist in defending his family. As we will see below, Ludwig’s new role as protector of his family was just one example of how the November Pogrom marked a departure from previous antisemitic violence in Nazi Germany.

Additionally, while scholars have traditionally conceptualized the escalation of violence during the November Pogrom as a turning point in Nazi antisemitic policy, we can also view how the Pogrom was an important moment in the destruction of Jewish children’s worldview.

One unnamed Jewish girl, writing in her diary on the morning of November 10, observed that “everything changed last night when Mama tucked me into bed, I was still a fairy-princess. But this morning it’s all different. Now I am just an ordinary ten year old girl, going on eleven, and pretty scared.” This overnight transformation of a ten-year-old Jewish child from a “fairy-princess” to an “ordinary and scared” girl revealed the enormous effect that the mass violence had on German-Jewish children. In their minds, the Pogrom was not just an outbreak of violence against the Jewish community in Germany, but it also marked the premature end of their worldview.

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109 Bauer, “Memoiren von Ludwig Bauer,” p. 4. According to Ludwig, the violence in Forchheim was mostly perpetrated by local officials, not ordinary people, although his testimony does indicate that many residents of the town knew exactly what was occurring and chose to do nothing.


111 Norbert Frei, National Socialist Rule in Germany: The Führer State, 1933 -1945 (Oxford, UK : Blackwell, 1993), 132. This view is largely supported by the fact that the November Pogrom marked the first coordinated attack against German Jews on a nationwide scale.

112 As quoted in Pine, Nazi Family Policy, 161.
childhoods. Following the Pogrom, the ways in which Jewish children perceived their surroundings would be radically transformed.

The transformation of children's perceptions of their homes and surroundings occurred during the Pogrom itself, when many children watched in horror as their homes were ripped apart by Nazi forces and their collaborators. In 2000, Philippe Storch described, in vivid terms, his memory of his home’s destruction:

I saw the gorgeous, elegant apartment in which I had been born and grown up, smashed and devastated, torn, broken, everything - the crystal chandeliers broken to pieces, our stately library, the leather sofas slashed open, our impressive dining room turned to ruins, the kitchen with its crockery broken, the mattresses of the bed cut open, their contents strewn all over the floor, the covers slit, feathers flying about through the bedroom. It was a heartbreaking site and I broke out in tears. Even the porcelain toilet seat was smashed!\(^{113}\)

Philippe’s description is striking for two primary reasons. First, his emphasis on the “elegance” of his apartment contrasted to the violence unfolding in front of his eyes. Everything from Philippe’s family’s leather sofas to their porcelain toilet seat was destroyed. From this perspective, we can see how the physical destruction of Philippe’s world mirrored the destruction of his family life. Home was no longer a haven for Philippe; rather, it was a site of annihilation.

However, Philippe did not mention an important factor that is central to understanding the effect that the November Pogrom had on Jewish children in Germany: children were direct witnesses to the violence. Not only were they confronted with secondary effects of the Pogrom, such as the imprisonment of their fathers, but they were forced to watch as their homes were destroyed.\(^{114}\) Philippe’s testimony provides an image of a home being ransacked. 

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\(^{114}\) The destruction of Jewish homes in the Pogrom also had a significant financial effect, as the German government confiscated all home insurance payouts given to Jews following the violence. See John Mendelsohn, ed., *The Crystal Night Pogrom*, vol. 3, 18 vols., *The Holocaust: Selected Documents* (New York: Garland Press, 1982), 79.
link is the fact that Philippe and his family were forced to watch as their home was invaded and destroyed.

This experience led to a large shift in how Jewish children would interact with atrocity in their daily lives. Philippe’s first-hand view of his community’s physical destruction was replicated throughout Germany. From Shmuel Kneller’s recollection of viewing the “red sky” above the burning synagogue where he had just celebrated his Bar Mitzvah to Rubin Möller’s awakening by Gestapo officers banging on his front door, Jewish children’s lives throughout Germany were irrevocably altered by the destruction of the physical vestiges of their communities.115

The destruction of Jewish property directly led to the placement of new responsibilities on the shoulders of children. Lore Gang-Saalheimer, a sixteen-year-old from Nuremberg, was living at boarding school when the Pogrom occurred. After hearing about the destruction in Nuremberg and the “atmosphere of complete gloom” which was plaguing her family, Lore left school to help her parents rebuild.116 The Pogrom compelled Lore, like Klaus Loewald, to act as a support mechanism for her family. These new family responsibilities never faded and Lore never returned to her school.117

“Heraus mit den Juden! [Out with the Jews!],” recalled Ruth Oppenheim, who was an eleven-year-old resident of Werne in 1938.118 Members of the SA, screaming at her front door, forced Ruth’s entire family to line up against the wall as they ransacked their apartment. After her father pleaded with the Nazi officers to spare his family, in Ruth’s words, “they pushed and

116 As quoted in Dwork, Children with a Star, 23.
117 As quoted in Dwork, Children with a Star, 23.
dragged him down the street with shouts and boasts of imminent revenge. In horror my sisters
and mother watched from the upstairs windows...sobbing we huddled together in one bed,
listening fearfully until long after they were gone.”

Violence inside of her home clearly colored Ruth’s memory of the Pogrom.

Ruth’s experience is representative of the effect that the Pogrom had on Jewish children. Not
only were fathers ripped away from their families, but Jewish children had to watch their parents
be humiliated and denigrated in public view. In Cologne, the Swiss consul reported that this
occurrence was not isolated to small towns such as Werne and that families were often forced to
watch as their belongings were torn to shreds and their fathers beaten. The end of Jewish
family life during the November Pogrom was not only centered on the destruction of children’s
belongings, but also the abasement of their role models.

The responses of Jewish children to this destruction often revealed insight into exactly how
the violence reshaped the daily lives of children in their larger communities. In Recklinghausen,
thirteen-year-old Doris Agatston shared Ruth Oppenheim’s experience of watching her house
being torn apart. When Doris’ father, a decorated veteran of the First World War, was about to be
arrested, she recognized the severity of the moment. In an interview in 1996, Doris stated, “They
said they were going to take the women and children out of the building [our home] and the men
had to stay behind. My mother said that she would not leave if my father wasn’t allowed to go…I

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120 Saul Friedländer, Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939 (New York, NY:
[then] went out [to the terrace] and threatened to jump off.” This response, while extreme, demonstrated the extent to which Jewish children were affected by the arrest of their fathers.

Doris’ suicidal response to viewing her family being torn apart during the Pogrom may have been an extreme example, yet it underlines the enormous impact that the invasion of Jewish homes had on German-Jewish children. The responses of Jewish children to the forced separation of Jewish families, as witnessed by Doris’ experience, were often radical in the midst of the mass violence. The breakup of their families meant the end of their daily lives up to that point. In the words of historian Marion Kaplan, “Young people saw no future for themselves in Germany.” The destruction of Jewish children’s daily lives during the November Pogrom only emphasized this point.

The Descent into Madness: Violence Against Jewish Children

We have seen how the violence which pervaded German society during the November Pogrom altered the course of children’s lives within Jewish households and forced Jewish children to take on more responsibility during the violence. Up to this point, however, children have only acted as witnesses to the violence. The popular narrative of the November Pogrom, as witnessed by the common use of the term “Kristallnacht,” is that the violence primarily targeted Jewish property. This was not the case. Jewish children not only viewed physical violence against their relatives, but they were also targets of the violence themselves.

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121 Doris Agatston, “Interview with Doris Agatston,” interview code 18161, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 1996. This experience is particularly noteworthy due to the fact that veterans of World War I were previously granted what was known as a Frontkämpferprivileg, or “front-line-fighter’s privilege,” which exempted them from dismissal from the professional civil service between 1933 and 1935. This exception was demanded by the late Weimar President and war hero Paul von Hindenburg after the passage of the Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamentums or “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service” on April 7, 1933.

122 Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 111.
The question of whether Jewish children were directly targeted by the Nazi state, or if these actions were derived from local initiatives, is part of a larger debate over whether the Pogrom was directed from above or from below. While some scholars still believe that the November Pogrom was a popular action, in a similar fashion to antisemitic violence throughout much of Modern European history, more recent work has indicated that the Pogrom was organized by Hitler and his Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels. A diplomatic note from the American consulate in Stuttgart to the State Department on November 15 corroborates this argument by stating that fire trucks were on standby prior to the burning of synagogues in order to prevent destruction of German property.

This debate within historiographical literature has yet to be connected with attacks against Jewish children during the Pogrom. However, documentation does exist on this matter. In his daily journals, on November 10, 1938, Joseph Goebbels discussed providing “appropriate instructions to the police and party leaders” on how to carry out the Pogrom. As Goebbels did not expand upon this note, historians have yet to find definitive evidence which indicates whether children were direct targets of the Pogrom. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that Jewish children were indirect targets of the violence. In addition, it was the most vulnerable children, those in orphanages and those separated from their parents, who faced the brunt of the violence.

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123 Fritzshe, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 134.
126 One cannot discount the possibility that violence against Jewish children during the Pogrom was an action intended to “work towards the wishes of Hitler.” See Ian Kershaw, “Working Towards the Führer: Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship,” *Contemporary European History* 2, no. 2 (1993): 103–118.
Stephan Lewy, a thirteen-year-old boy living in Berlin’s Auerbach orphanage in 1938, was one of these children. In the middle of the Pogrom, Nazi officers entered the orphanage, forced out all of the adults, and locked the one hundred young children in the synagogue’s sanctuary. While the Nazis didn’t light the synagogue on fire due to its proximity to a German-owned apartment, the synagogue was flooded with gasoline.127 In Stephan’s later words, it was only because “one of the boys had the good sense to take a chair and break one of the beautiful glass windows.” that he survived the ordeal.128 Children such as Stephan had to act on their own initiative in order to secure their physical safety.

Stephan’s experience demonstrated that children, in some cases, had no choice but to defend themselves in the face of physical violence. It was the children themselves, rather than their parents and overseers, who orchestrated their escape from the Auerbach synagogue. These violent attacks against Jewish children spread beyond the capital city. In Dinslaken, a town in the Rhineland, fifty plain-clothed Nazi officers stormed a Jewish orphanage. As “the children screamed with terror,” the Nazis “began systematically wrecking the place.”129 After these children, aged six to sixteen, were forced outside in the cold November weather, they ran down the street to the town hall for protection. The police chief proudly announced to this crowd of shivering children, “Jews do not get protection from us! Vacate the area...as quickly as

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possible!”

Even when speaking to a crowd of Jewish children, the mayor of Dinslaken openly supported violence against Jewish orphans.

The violence against Jewish children in the Dinslaken Orphanage clearly took on a variety of forms. While the attack in Dinslaken was a demonstration of physical violence against Jewish children, it was also an example of how children, even in the absence of family bonds, took on additional roles, such as advocating for their themselves without any support, during the November Pogrom. In this case, it was the children who confronted the police chief alone. This collapse of the traditional role of adults protecting children in society can be seen through the actions of these Jewish orphans. Throughout Germany, from Dinslaken to Königsberg, where a band of rioters forced the children of a Jewish orphanage out onto the street in their nightclothes, children used their unique positions in society to fight for their survival.

Attacks against Jewish children spread far beyond the confines of orphanages. In a 1996 written reflection, former Munich resident Heinz Krieger, an amateur photographer, recalled being beaten over the head with his camera until he was bleeding during the Pogrom. Corroborating a similar sight in Leipzig, the American consul reported seeing “insatiably sadistic perpetrators” throwing away “trembling inmates [indicating Jews],” including children, into a river. All throughout Germany, local authorities took it upon themselves to attack Jewish children when they were separated from their parents. Heinz’s experience demonstrates the fact that Jewish men and Jewish property were not the only targets of the November Pogrom.

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130 Yitzhak S. Herz, “Kristallnacht at the Dinslaken Orphanage,” Yad Vashem Studies XI (1976): 346. Most of these orphans escaped Nazi Germany prior to the outbreak of World War II. See chapter three for more information of children’s emigration from Nazi Germany.
131 Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 122.
133 As quoted in Friedländer, Nazi Germany and the Jews, 277.
Echoing the testimony of Heinz Krieger, Ludwig Bauer recalled widespread violence against Jewish children in Forchheim. Following the destruction of the town’s synagogue, members of the SA forced twelve-year-old Ludwig to “pick up their own excrement,” referring to the remnants of the synagogue. Reflecting on his childhood experiences, Ludwig stated that “our indignation at this public humiliation of law-abiding citizens defies description. We were in a state of disbelief and overcome by mixed emotions – absolute rage due to violation, coupled with relentless fear of the immediate unknown. All belief in humanity vanished!” Here we can view a crucial aspect of children’s experiences during the November Pogrom. The November Pogrom not only saw new responsibilities forced on children, but it also saw a unique form of humiliation for Jewish children. This “state of disbelief,” while not unique to children, permanently changed the way in which Ludwig and his peers viewed their communities.

Finally, violence against Jewish children extended into other institutions, such as boarding schools, where children and parents could not communicate during the heart of the violence. Fifteen-year-old Marianne David, living at boarding school in Bad Kreuznach, recalled her experience during the November Pogrom:

I was woken in the middle of the night by shouting and banging, then men in Nazi uniforms burst into my room screaming ‘Raus! Raus!’...I got dressed and went outside where everybody was gathering in a frightened group. Matron was there trying to keep everyone calm. The Nazis were bringing items, books and other things, out of the building, piling them up to be set alight...there was an SS man going along it with a club, systematically smashing the glass on each pretty nursery picture on the wall. Frightened as I was, it still struck me as such a pointless thing to do.\(^1\)

\(^{134}\) Ludwig Bauer, “Memoiren von Ludwig Bauer,” p. 5. Bauer is stating that the Nazis referred to the burnt synagogue as the “excrement of the Jews.”
\(^{135}\) Bauer, “Memoiren von Ludwig Bauer,” p. 5.
\(^{136}\) As quoted in Gilbert, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction*, 74.
Marianne’s experience, when read in context with the fact that she was hundreds of miles away from her family, is harrowing. Her observation that the burning of “books and other things” was “such a pointless thing to do” reveals a key element of children's experiences during the November Pogrom. Children, like many German Jews experiencing rising antisemitism under the Nazi regime, did not understand the rapid societal transformation which was occurring around them. In the eyes of many children, the mass violence which spread throughout Germany in November 1938 made no sense. This is a crucial observation. It is through the eyes of Jewish children that we can see how arbitrary the violence really was.

**Conclusion**

By the end of the Pogrom on the evening of November 11, 1938, the pace of change in the lives of Jewish children accelerated. On November 15, all remaining Jewish children in German schools were expelled, due to the “burden on German children” of having to share their classroom with “murderers.” The expulsion of Jewish children from schools marked a key step in the transformation of Jews from neighbors and friends to what is known in German as “Lebensunwertes Leben,” or “life unworthy of life.” After antisemitic edicts forced their extraction from German society and public life, children were largely forgotten.

The end of the November Pogrom left children with a world that “was about to fall apart.” Analyzing the November Pogrom from the eyes of German children not only yields a new viewpoint on the violence, but it also allows us to view the difficulties of studying atrocity from the perspective of historians. Children’s testimonies are often difficult to examine, as many come

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137 As quoted in Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 285. “Murderers” in this context refers back to the shooting of Ernst vom Rath, the German diplomat in Paris whose death was an excuse to begin the state-sponsored violence.

from survivors whose experiences have been affected by the passage of time. Nevertheless, these testimonies are crucial to nuancing our understanding of this important history.

While scholars have begun to broach the topic of childhood during the Holocaust over the past two decades, more research must focus on analyzing the experiences of children during the November Pogrom. Jewish children were certainly victims; however, they also openly advocated for the safety of their families, even at risk of physical harm. Jewish children, like many of their parents and grandparents, were deeply integrated in German society. They played after school games with their “German” neighbors and many of them embraced German culture to the same extent as their non-German peers.\(^{139}\) It was only after the November Pogrom, when German Jews began emigrating *en masse*, when many Jewish children were permanently separated from the only home that they had ever known.

From Klaus Loewald, the sixteen-year-old train aficionado in Cologne, to thirteen-year-old Paul Safirstein, who “still saw the world optimistically” during the Pogrom, Jewish children were integral in securing their own personal safety along with contributing to the survival of their families. This is one of the primary observations of examining the November Pogrom from the perspective of Jewish children. When attacks against German Jews began on a nationwide scale during the Pogrom, it was often those who were perceived by the governing authorities as having no authority who had integral roles in defending their families. This transformation of roles permanently altered the lives of Jewish children in Nazi Germany.

\(^{139}\) “German” is in quotation marks here as to indicate the government-sponsored definition of “German” during this time. Many Jewish children were just as much “German” as their non-Jewish friends.
Chapter III
Life After the Pogrom: The Beginning of the End

“I consider it as out of the question that my son be seated next to a Jew in a German school and [that the Jew] be given a German history lesson.”¹⁴⁰ - Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister of Propaganda

The morning after the conclusion of the November Pogrom, eleven-year-old Olga Drucker could not find her father anywhere. “Where’s Papa,” Olga asked her mother. “He...he’s had to go away for a while,” her mother responded. Yet Olga was suspicious of her mother’s response. Her father was always at home in the mornings. However, late in the evening of November 10, the SA arrested Olga’s father and imprisoned him in Dachau.¹⁴¹ It was events such as this which altered the lives of children such as Olga and continued to signal the end of everyday life in Nazi Germany for Jewish children.

Throughout Germany, thousands of Jewish children awoke on the morning of November 11 to find their fathers missing from home. Although the exact number of Jewish men arrested during the Pogrom remains a matter of historical debate, most scholars estimate that the regime sent approximately 30,000 Jewish men to concentration camps in the course of the Pogrom. The absence of family members in the wake of the violence was just another step in the attempted destruction of the German-Jewish family by the German government. As the Nazi state began implementing harsher antisemitic edicts following the Pogrom, children’s normal activities continued to be harshly curtailed, even more so than prior to the violence, and the parameters of

¹⁴¹ Olga Drucker, “Kinderransport 1939,” 1989, p. 1, ME 493, Leo Baeck Institute, New York. Dachau was likely chosen as the primary camp for the imprisonment of Jewish men due to its location near the major city of Munich and its well established reputation within the emerging Nazi camp system. For a history of the camp as well as its role in the November Pogrom, see Harold Marcuse, Legacies of Dachau, The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1993-2001 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), particularly pp. 21-35.
their physical worlds were significantly reduced. The antisemitic laws passed by the Nazi government officially marked Jewish children, through forced name changes, and, alongside the ban on Jewish attendance at public schools, Jewish children became more and more isolated from their non-Jewish peers.

As the regime radicalized its implementation of antisemitic measures following the November Pogrom, many German-Jewish families concluded that life in Germany was no longer possible and that emigration was the sole solution. In order to discern the experiences of German-Jewish children during this period, the following chapter seeks to examine the experiences of children who left Germany, both with their families and alone, prior to the outbreak of war in September 1939. As every German-Jewish child had a different experience in Nazi Germany, it is difficult to generalize the testimony of a small number of children to the entire population. Instead, this section seeks to discern how a specific group of seventeen Jewish children, all of whom eventually emigrated and survived the Holocaust, experienced the period following the November Pogrom.

Additionally, while this study focuses on how the November Pogrom was a crucial turning point in the lives of German-Jewish children, it is essential to acknowledge the fact that any study of the experiences Jewish children in Nazi Germany will be incomplete, as we have few remaining materials from those who were killed during the process of deportation and extermination. Therefore, this chapter examines the experiences of German-Jewish children who were lucky enough to escape Germany and how they remembered their lives after the Pogrom.

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This specific lens accounts for only a portion of German-Jewish children’s experiences during the Holocaust.

For many Jewish children, the November Pogrom punctuated the Nazi regime’s attempt to destroy the course of their lives, a process which began in the mid-1930s. After their last refuge, the home, was destroyed, German-Jewish children sought new strategies to cope with a world that was becoming more and more hostile to their existence. While some children left Germany with their families, others were forced to leave from the only home that they had ever known by themselves. However, the common link between all German-Jewish children following the November Pogrom, whether the emigrated or not, was the final break from their integrated lives in German communities.

**The Disfigurement of Identity and Family**

Experiences such as Olga’s, of children waking up on November 11, 1938 without their fathers, was the first indication that the November Pogrom might physically alter family life for Jewish children in Nazi Germany. Unlike previous bouts of antisemitic violence and rhetoric in the German state, many Jewish families perceived the Pogrom as a crucial turning point in the breakdown of their daily lives. Arnold Paucker, a member of a German-Jewish youth movement, later described the response of Jewish children to the violence. Paucker recalled in 1995 that, “young Jews felt no loss…They clung to the hopes and dreams of youth: even in the darkest time there was a will to live, a lust for life, and silliness and humor among Jewish boys and girls.”

Even in the face of a world that was closing in on them, this sentiment is widely present in the later testimony of Jewish children who escaped Nazi Germany

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143 As quoted in Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 111. This quotation is Kaplan’s paraphrasing of Paucker’s remarks.
Nevertheless, children also recognized the significance of the events which occurred before their eyes. Twelve-year-old Ursula Pawel, a so-called Mischling, the German term for Jews who had at least one Jewish parent or grandparent, noted in 2000 that “[after the Pogrom] it became quite clear what the Nazis were capable of, and now everybody was desperate to leave Germany.” \(^\text{144}\) This realization could not be hidden from children such as Ursula who immediately began experiencing the harmful effects of the November Pogrom through the arrests of their fathers and the destruction of their homes. As children attempted to pick up the pieces of their lives following the violence, they entered a changed world that had far less resemblance to their lives prior to the November Pogrom.

This changed world primarily consisted of an attack against children’s German-Jewish identity. In the months immediately preceding the Pogrom, on August 17, 1938, the German government enacted the “Law on Alteration of Family and Personal Names” which required all German Jews to adopt the additional name of “Israel” for men and “Sara” for women. \(^\text{145}\) This law was also applicable to Jewish children who in turn were deeply affected by the law. Edgar Feuchtwanger, the fourteen-year-old boy in Munich whose bedroom was invaded by the Gestapo during the Pogrom, remembered remarking, “My name is now Edgar-Israel, my father is Ludwig-Israel, and my mother is Erna-Sara.” \(^\text{146}\) In the eyes of his friends and government, Edgar was transformed into “Edgar-Israel.” This law also evoked the increasing challenges faced by German-Jewish children in reconciling their “German” and “Jewish” identities. As Jewish


children were now formally marked as enemies of the “people’s community,” they often reformulated their identities around these new names.

Following the November Pogrom, many Jewish children shared Edgar’s experiences. In a undated post-war reflection, former Berlin resident Marianne Elsey wrote that “we [German Jews] now had to register and be counted, and were issued special identity cards...My own birth certificate, duly decorated with the swastika stamp notes in the margin that ‘the above named father of the child, hereby indicates that his above mentioned child will in future take the additional name of Sara.’” Marianne’s comments also bring up the fact that Jews were, at the same time, branded with a mark of shame and living in a community and nation that sought their removal. This duality pressured many Jewish children to seek refuge in their families.

At home, many Jewish children quickly came to terms with the arrest of their fathers. In order to fill this gap, some children actively took on the responsibilities traditionally held by their fathers. This reformulation of family roles is key to understanding children’s lives following the Pogrom. In 1995, Beatrice Karp, formerly a seven year old living in Karlsruhe, recalled having to take on an additional role now that her father was imprisoned at Dachau. Beatrice stated that “[her mother] had difficulty hearing and I was the one [now that her father was imprisoned at Dachau], when she didn’t hear cars approaching, who used to always take her hands as we

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147 Marianne Elsey, “Without Bitterness,” p. 34, ME 989, Leo Baeck Institute, New York.
148 “Removal” in 1938 still maintained the denotation of voluntary emigration from German-controlled territory. After the onset of mass extermination in Fall 1941, “removal” became a code-word for deportation and murder. For an explicit reference to this euphemism by Heinrich Himmler, see Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman, and Abraham Margaliot, eds., Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union (Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Vashem, 1981) pp. 344-345. “Ich meine die Judenevakuation, die Ausrottung des jüdischen Volkes. Es gehört zu den Dingen, die man leicht ausspricht. "Das jüdische Volk wird ausgerottet", sagt Ihnen jeder Parteigenosse, "ganz klar, steht in unserem Programm drin, Ausschaltung der Juden, Ausrottung, machen wir, pfahl!, Kleinigkeit.”
crossed the streets and I used to say “Mama, it’s alright...I had to grow up very fast.” Beatrice’s adoption of a new role following the Pogrom is a continuation of the transformation of family dynamics witnessed during the violence. Now that government authorities had arrested her father, Beatrice had to take over his role of guiding her mother.

Jewish children’s new perspective of their parents following the Pogrom expanded beyond filling the shoes of their imprisoned fathers. The relationships between mothers and daughters also radically changed. During one mother-daughter outing, Marianne Elsey reported accidentally walking into an SS gathering in Potsdam along the river Spree and having to lead her mother away from the gawking SS men. Marianne wrote that “we looked unmistakably Jewish and to be noticed there might cause trouble...Our daily lives were punctuated with continual scares of this sort.” Marianne’s experience demonstrated the central role that Jewish children often played in their families following the Pogrom.

Following the November Pogrom, many Jewish children faced a changed world inside their homes. In 2002, survivor Ruth David noted that after the Pogrom, “We [the Jews] had become notorious. It was clear that continuing to live [in Germany] would not only be difficult, it would become impossible.” Ruth’s comments demonstrated the stark reality faced by Jewish children as the year 1938 ended. Many of their fathers and male relatives were in concentration camps and their family lives were in disarray. This phenomenon, of complete disorder in family, was not limited to life at home. When Jewish children turned outwards, towards their non-Jewish neighbors, for support, they often found rejection and ostracization.

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In the Community: Jewish Schools and “Aryan” Friends

In the weeks and months following the Pogrom, as Jewish children witnessed the breakdown of their families, there was a parallel breakdown in their public lives. Inside the classroom, the Nazi state forced Jewish children out of a system that was already hostile to their existence. In their once-integrated communities, the final frayed bonds between Jewish and non-Jewish friends began to finally break. The community, like the home, only saw the further alienation of German-Jewish children from their surroundings.

In line with the state-sponsored goal of “cleansing” the German nation of all “racial enemies,” the Nazi state implemented a wide variety of antisemitic edicts following the November Pogrom. For children, the most damaging of these new laws ordered the expulsion of all Jewish children from public schools. As of November 15, 1938, the Reich Ministry of Education banned all Jewish students from taking classes in German public schools. State Secretary Zschintsch, a subordinate of education minister Bernhard Rust, explained the minister of education’s decision, “After the heinous murder in Paris one cannot demand of any German teacher to continue to teach Jewish children. It is also self-evident that it is unbearable for German schoolchildren to sit in the same classroom with Jewish children.”\(^{152}\) This statement from the Reich deputy education minister demonstrated the various antisemitic initiatives enacted by the German government following the November Pogrom. Even in the realm of childhood education, the Nazi state sought to excise Jewish children from the so-called “people’s community.”

Zschintsch’s statement referred directly to the assassination of Ernst vom Rath by Jewish teenager Herschel Grynszpan in Paris, which the Nazi state used as justification to attack

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\(^{152}\) As quoted in Friedländer, Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939, 284 and Letter of State Secretary Zschintsch, 17.3.1938 (NG-1261) in Mendelsohn, The Holocaust, vol. 1, p. 75.
German Jews. However, noticeably absent in this statement was any direct link between the thousands of Jewish children in Germany and Grynszpan. It is clear that Rust and the leadership of the Reich used the act of one individual to paint all German Jews, including children, as enemies of the people. This rationale would continue to be used as the Nazi state radicalized its antisemitic measures in the years following the November Pogrom.

The expulsion of Jewish children from public schools was not widely announced prior to the law taking effect. Survivor Esra Jurmann, nine years old at the time of the Pogrom, reported in 1997 that when he entered his Dresden classroom on November 15, 1938, he was handed a note for his parents which stated, “In order to avoid unpleasantness, your son is sent on leave from our school with effect from today and will remain on leave until such time as it becomes feasible for him to go to a Jewish school in Dresden.” After the principal of his primary school turned Esra away from his classroom on November 15, Esra never returned to school.

The implementation of the ban on Jewish children attending German schools was not uniform. In Mülheim, the local principal allowed six-year-old Ralph Zivi to attend school on November 15 and “everything seemed normal.” However, when his class was dismissed at the end of the school day, Ralph’s teacher called him over and told him that he “would not have to return to school anymore.” When he returned home and informed his mother of the news, Ralph was happy, he recalled later, because he wouldn’t have to go to school anymore. Ordinary reactions such as Ralph’s to this changed world demonstrated the stark effect of the policy banning Jewish children from the education system.

154 Ralph Zivi, “Journey to America,” p. 2, ME 1489, Leo Baeck Institute, New York.
Like any other child his age, Ralph relished the fact that he would no longer have to attend classes. As he was unable to fully comprehend the drastic implications of the ban on Jewish children from German schools, Ralph reverted to a reaction of excitement to having time off from school. Eventually, Ralph and his brother were sent to a hastily constructed school in the basement of the Jewish Community Center adjoining the destroyed Freiburg Synagogue. In June 1939, he left Germany forever to live with relatives in Alsace.155 Ralph’s experience demonstrated the crucial turning point that the November Pogrom represented. Familiar routines effectively ended.

In the months following the end of the Pogrom, as parents sought to find alternatives to the public school system, many turned to private Jewish schools in order to educate their children. Inge Auerbacher reported having to walk alone, at age four, two miles each day to Göppingen in order to catch a train to school in Stuttgart.156 The only formal Jewish school in the entire province was in Stuttgart. This extraordinary account of a four year old’s journey to school demonstrated the huge strain on Jewish children’s lives following the November Pogrom. However, the circumstances of Jewish life following the Pogrom necessitated this journey.

Throughout Germany, children such as Ralph were struggling with the near simultaneous arrest of their fathers and the forcible removal of Jewish children from the German school system. On the same day that Edgar Feuchtwanger was told to leave his Munich school, he learned that the Gestapo had just arrested his Uncle Fritz. Now that both his father and his uncle were in custody, Edgar’s aunt moved in with him and his mother.157 This forced change in living situations was necessitated by the reformulation of Jewish families in Nazi Germany. Yet even as

155 Zivi, “Journey to America,” p. 2.
157 Feuchtwanger, Hitler, My Neighbor: Memories of a Jewish Childhood, 182.
this disfigurement was taking place inside the home, children such as Edgar would find no solace in their non-Jewish peers.

Jewish children no longer had the opportunity to interact with their non-Jewish friends on a daily basis. Moreover, the tenuous links which previously existed between Jewish and non-Jewish children further devolved into open hostility. Jules Wallerstein, an eleven-year-old boy in Fürth in 1939, recalled in 2001 the significance of the November Pogrom for his social life. “My friends were Jewish and non-Jewish. We played soldiers, went to each other’s homes and made fun of some of the Nazi leaders. My non-Jewish friends never called me foul names or called me a dirty Jew. However, after Kristallnacht everything changed and we no longer saw one another.” Jules’ experience demonstrated the destructive effect that the Pogrom had on the everyday experiences of Jewish children in Nazi Germany. In the aftermath of the violence, German-Jewish children faced a changed world that would never compare to their pre-Pogrom lives.

This breakdown of friendships also affected children who were scarred by the violence in their towns. Ludwig Bauer, the twelve-year-old boy in Forchheim who was forced to clean up the remnants of his town’s synagogue alongside his father, later recalled the state of his life in the days following the Pogrom. “Miserable and frightening. There are no other words to describe it...At best you would be ignored, at worst be chased be some stone-wielding mobs. When your former ‘closest’ friends shun you, or tell you that they can no longer associate with you, how would you feel?” Ludwig remarked that even his closest friends ignored him following the

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violence. For a twelve year old, this radical change in circumstances had a damaging effect on his existence.

Additionally, the aftermath of the Pogrom not only saw the end of friendships between Jewish and non-Jewish children, but it also marked a rise in antisemitic acts committed against Jewish children by their peers. Ursula Pawel recalled her encounter with a Hitler Youth group following the Pogrom. As she walked by, the children heckled her with the following verses in Düsseldorf:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Jew Isaac} & \quad \text{Jude Itzig} \\
\text{Pointy schnozz} & \quad \text{Nase spitzig} \\
\text{Angular eyes} & \quad \text{Augen eckig} \\
\text{Filthy ass} & \quad \text{Arschloch dreckig}. \tag{160}
\end{align*}
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Outside of her recently ransacked home, Ursula was harassed not by Nazi officials or ideologues, but by children her own age. This interaction was both a representation of the “new normal” for German-Jewish children and a microcosm of the constant assault on Jewish women and men in Nazi Germany. Children like Ursula were not immune to these attacks, even from children their own age.

Ursula’s experience represented only a portion of attacks against Jewish children by their non-Jewish peers. Some of these encounters involved violent physical acts. In 1939, thirteen-year-old Martin Birn from the German-Polish border town of Stettin reflected on this fact when he remarked, “The only other thing I remember about Stettin was that we had to be careful going back and forth to [the Jewish] school to avoid attacks by Hitler Youth kids...I remember getting shot at with a BB gun or slingshot several times.”\(^\text{161}\) This phenomenon

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\(^{160}\) Pawel, *My Child Is Back!*, 38. Both the English and German translations were both provided by Ursula Pawel.

mirrored the radicalization of antisemitic edicts enacted by the German government following the November Pogrom.

The experiences of German-Jewish children during the Pogrom permanently altered their the course of their lives. Due to their expulsion from the German school system, Jewish students were cut off from a sphere that represented one of their last major links with the so-called “Aryan” world. Outside of the classroom, the aftermath of the Pogrom witnessed the continuing alienation of Jewish children, with examples of verbal assaults committed against children throughout the nation. Many of these events convinced Jewish children and parents alike that a future no longer existed for them in Nazi Germany.

**Leaving Home Forever: Emigration and Kindertransporte**

In the months following the November Pogrom, German Jews began to look for alternative solutions to the numerous antisemitic edicts issued by the Nazi state. It quickly became clear that life in Nazi Germany was no longer feasible for Jews. For children, the decision of their parents to forsake a future in Germany meant a radical shift in their lives. Eschewing a daily routine which emphasized clinging to any semblance of their pre-Pogrom lives, Jewish children now prepared to permanently cut ties with their non-Jewish neighbors and oftentimes their parents, as well. This radical shift characterized German-Jewish family life after the Pogrom.

Jewish children who left Germany after November 1938 can be categorized into two main groups. Those who were able to secure a visa to another country left Germany alongside their families. The second, far more precarious group of children were those who left Germany on the so-called “Children’s Transports.” Known in German as “Kindertransporte,” these foreign-government-sponsored movements sought to secure the emigration of German-Jewish
children from Nazi Germany. In response to the horrors of the November Pogrom, 10,000 Jewish minors escaped from Germany and its occupied territories to the United Kingdom.  

The children who participated in these transports had to leave Germany and settle in a foreign nations, such as the United Kingdom, without any direct support from their families. In response to the resiliency of Jewish children to adapt to these new life circumstances, Esra Jurmann remarked in 1997 that, “one was so used to things happening...one took it, one accepted it. Any child is excited by change, one doesn’t ask.” Children such as Esra faced this reality of rapid change following the violence of November 1938.

Children’s escape from Nazi Germany led to a wide variety of destinations. While some Jewish children escaped Europe altogether with their families, others found refuge in other European countries such as France, the Netherlands, and Poland. At the time, few could imagine that in only a few short years the entire European continent would be under Nazi control. The fact that many Jews considered other European nations as safe from persecution demonstrated the frame of mind of German Jews in 1938. Fleeing to another European nation was not seen as dangerous by German Jews, as Germany’s expansion throughout Europe was never predestined. For many children, the result was the same. Emigration from Germany resulted in the cutting of ties with children’s traditions and culture.

However, Jewish children also recognized the importance of leaving their homes at a young age. In his postwar reflections, survivor Henry Schuster remarked that following the Pogrom. “Desperation now existed. It was time to flee Germany as fast as possible...Many families,
including mine, had no way to escape. Parents wanted to save their children and found ways for them to leave Germany and Austria.”\textsuperscript{165} Henry could sense this “desperation” in the air, and he knew that it was time to leave Germany. Some children, like Henry, comprehended the severity of their situation and even at a young age realized that the November Pogrom marked a significant turning point in their ability to continue to live in Nazi Germany.

In the months following the Pogrom, some German-Jewish families were lucky enough to escape Nazi domination while remaining together. These Jewish families sought refuge in nations around the world. The Wallersteins were one such family who secured passage out of Germany. Thirteen-year-old Jules and his parents left for Cuba on the SS. St. Louis on May 13, 1939. The ship sailed to Havana, where only 50 passengers were allowed to disembark. They then sailed to Miami, where U.S. officials denied them entry. Jules was forced to return to Europe, where his family found temporary refuge in Belgium.\textsuperscript{166} Immediately before the deportation of Belgian Jews in 1941, Jules and his parents secured American visas and escaped.

While the story of the SS St. Louis is one of the most well-known case studies of how European Jews were denied refuge into Western nations, it also sheds light on the experiences of children such as Jules. The process of emigration was one filled with uncertainty and Jules is an example of how escape from Germany was never a certainty for Jewish families. Unlike the Wallersteins, most Jews were unable to secure visas in order to leave Germany, and by late 1941, the ability of Jews to leave was severely hampered by the fact that Germany was now at war with most nations that accepted even a limited number of German-Jewish refugees.

\textsuperscript{165} Jason and Posner, eds., \textit{Don’t Wave Goodbye}, 22. After the so-called “Anschluss” on March 12, 1938, Germany absorbed Austria into the Greater German Reich. The Pogrom was also executed in Austria, although that region is not the primary focus of this thesis, the author did find anecdotal evidence to suggest that the same transformation of family dynamics occurred in cities such as Vienna.

This uncertainty was even more prominent as many Jewish fathers were arrested and sent to concentration camps such as Dachau and Buchenwald following the Pogrom. Unlike the fate of Jews imprisoned in camps during the war, Jewish men were released from Dachau and Buchenwald in late-December 1938. After the return of many of these men in December 1938, Jewish families felt a heightened pressure to leave Germany. In 2000, Fritz Ottenheimer, a former Jewish child from the German-Swiss border town of Konstanz, noted that after his father returned from Dachau, his family was determined to emigrate. After applying for visas at the American consulate, Fritz “would race down to the mailbox as soon as the mail was delivered, and [his] parents would meet [him] at the door.” Even after six months, there was no response. Eventually, in May 1939, Fritz finally received a letter in the mail and left for New York City within a few months.

Fritz’s unfulfilled hope is emblematic of many Jewish children in Nazi Germany. With far more applicants than visas available, it was incredibly difficult for Jewish families to secure passage out of Germany. Yet the experiences of Jews during the November Pogrom loomed large in the push for emigration. When authorities released his father from Dachau following the Pogrom, Edgar Feuchtwanger recalled that “[my father said] we’re going to leave...you’ll see we’re going to leave this hell behind, and we’ll finally stop living opposite that man [referring to Hitler], that bastard.” Edgar recalled that this was the first moment when he heard his otherwise proper father curse. The arrest of Jewish fathers and the disfigurement of Jewish family life contributed to this atmosphere of frustration and fear for children in Nazi Germany.

167 Jewish men were released on the condition that they secure a visa and immediately emigrate from Germany. See Friedländer, Nazi Germany and the Jews, 288.
168 Fritz Ottenheimer, Escape and Return: Memories of Nazi Germany (Kearney, NE: Morris Press, 2000), 36.
169 Ottenheimer, Escape and Return, 39.
170 Feuchtwanger, Hitler, My Neighbor: Memories of a Jewish Childhood, 187.
For those families that were lucky enough to secure visas, the actual process of leaving their homeland was emotionally and physically taxing. In a postwar reflection, Ann Lewis, a ten-year-old girl who left Germany with her family in 1938 described her painful departure:

Relatives and friends – perhaps twelve or fifteen people – had gathered to see us off…Everyone had brought presents…flowers, chocolate, sweets, magazines, books…I have never forgotten this picture of the little knot of our friends and relations, standing close together as if to give each other mutual comfort, waving to us as the train carried us away. Sometimes I am surprised how often it comes into my thoughts. Although this leave-taking occurred when I was still so young, it marked the most important turning-point of my life…the fundamental break with my roots. 

Ann’s departure from Germany one that was marked by items that would normally be associated with joyous events such as flowers and chocolate. Yet this crucial turning point in Ann’s upbringing was far from a happy occurrence. Her family was compelled to leave due to the rising threat of state-sponsored antisemitism in Nazi Germany after the Pogrom.

Aside from Anne’s testimony, many Jewish children experienced harassment as they were leaving Germany. Philippe Storch entered the Netherlands via the German land border. When he showed the German border guard his passport, they forced Philippe to put on his tefillim and kicked him. As Philippe walked away, the guards said, “You Jew, you will never come back to Germany!” Even as he was exiting Germany forever, fifteen-year-old Philippe was harassed and physically attacked for his perceived “race.”

However, for some Jews, the desire to emigrate never materialized. Germany was the home for many Jews for generations, and some families thought that Nazi antisemitism would simply pass. Erna Florsheim of Königsbach, holding back tears in a postwar testimony, remarked that

171 As quoted in Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 137.
172 Philippe Storch “My Life,” p. 8, ME 1249, Leo Baeck Institute, New York. “Du Jude, du kommst nie wieder nach Deutschland zurück.” Tefillin are a small set of black boxes worn on the head by observant Jews during morning prayers.
“they [my parents] were afraid with four small children to go to a new country, not knowing the language, how does one make a living? By the time they decided to leave, it was too late.”

After being deported to the Gurs Transit Camp outside of Paris, Erna was able to emigrate to New York. Erna’s family had lived in Germany for generations, and her parents were wary of an emigration process that did not guarantee their family safety in a new home. This diversity of viewpoints surrounding emigration was widely present in the German-Jewish community following the November Pogrom.

In the later months of 1938 and early 1939, Jewish families began to search for alternate ways to secure the safety of their children. As opportunities to emigrate as a family dwindled due to the strict quotas placed on emigration by foreign powers, Jewish parents sought to send their children abroad by themselves. Between 1934 and 1939, about 18,000 Jewish children left Nazi Germany for other nations on “children’s transports.” Of this group, about 8,000 children went to England, 3,400 to Palestine, and the rest to other European countries and the United States.174 These transports sought to provide for the emigration of Jewish children from Germany, and the desire of social groups abroad to secure to safety of Jewish children were largely established in response to the horrors of the November Pogrom.175 As we will see below, children’s responses to this movement varied from unbridled excitement to unqualified fear.

By the eve of World War II in September 1939, approximately 82% of Jewish children under sixteen had emigrated from Germany.176 A major factor in the motivation to provide for the

174 Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 197.
175 Marion Berghahn, Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2007), 111.
176 Stargardt, Witnesses of War, 29.
emigration of Jewish children from Germany was the trauma of the November Pogrom. Reflecting on the connection between the Pogrom and emigration in 2013, Ruth Gutmann remarked, “After the destruction of our synagogue, our life was no longer the same. While in December 1938, the Jewish community - and our family - attempted to regroup and school was resumed in our house, our parents began to think of the possibility of sending Eva and me abroad.” 177 Ruth’s reflection demonstrated the effect that the Pogrom had on the decision to send Jewish children abroad. The radicalizing antisemitic measures enacted by the German government could no longer be ignored.

Children like Ruth largely understood the radical changes which were occurring in their lives. In 1997, Manfred (Fred) Katz, an eleven year old in Oberlauingen during the Pogrom, echoed Ruth’s reflections on life after the Pogrom by stating that “[after the Pogrom] it was clear that there was no future for us Jews” and “my parents made the decision that if they couldn’t get out, they would at least try to get me out.” 178 Fred’s parents’ desire to get their child out of Germany was one shared by many Jewish parents. These “children’s transports” provided the opportunity to shield their children from the aftermath of the November Pogrom. 179 In 1939, Fred was eventually sent on a “children’s transport” to the United Kingdom.

The physical process of leaving was incredibly challenging for Jewish children, with many refusing to leave their parents. Erna Florsheim was given the opportunity to escape to England on a “children’s transport” but stayed at home to care for her parents. 180 Similarly, in a postwar

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179 The transports themselves were jointly organized by the Refugee Children’s Movement, a British charitable organization, and the Central British Fund for German Jewry.
180 Florsheim, Interview 21139.
memoir, Marianne Elsey remarked that “the last few days [before leaving for England] with my parents were sheer hell, I absolutely hated leaving them, for although at that time there was no immediate thought of war, I felt it was forever. I am sure they had the same feeling...I never saw them again.”

At the time of her departure, Marianne believed that she would never see her family again as she was compelled to leave for her own safety.

Additionally, the practical concern of a language barrier plagued Jewish children who were sent on these transports. Before he left Germany, Fred Katz “didn’t concern himself with...the matter of the English language” as his only priority was “to get away” from Germany. This desire to escape at all costs, no matter the challenges that might lie ahead, was one shared by many children. After her parents told her that she was to be sent to England, Ruth Oppenheimer David wondered about life in England, “England? My scanty schooling had taught me little. I knew there was no Führer there...A feeling of injustice mingled with my initial distress. It was not fair that I was to be the first of the younger Oppenheimers to leave.”

This fear of departing alone to a foreign land colored the testimony of child survivors in the postwar years.

When the day children were to leave finally arrived, Jewish families experienced a mix of emotions. On one hand, children were on their way to safety. On the other, they were, in many cases, permanently separated from their parents. Olga Drucker embodied this conflict in her memory of leaving home forever, writing, “Today is the day! Mama will come with me as far as Wiesbaden, where my Omama [grandmother] lives. I kiss Papa goodbye...Omama meets us in Wiesbaden. Mama gets off. My nose is flat against the dirty windowpane, until I can’t see them

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182 Katz, “Interview with Manfred Katz.”
anymore...I have no idea that six weeks will stretch into six years!" Olga was excited about the prospect of going on a journey, yet she could never have predicted the length of her separation from her parents. Unlike many other children, Olga was not permanently separated from her parents. However, this experience forced children like Olga to adapt to their ever-changing circumstances of survival. While she was reunited with her parents in 1945, Olga spent much of her formative years away from her family and with the fear that her parents had been murdered.

At the final point of departure for Jewish children in Germany, the train station, mixed emotions remained omnipresent. Ruth David remembered her mother asking the big boy in the departing group, “a semi-adult of 13 or so, to look after [her].” Again, here we see the continuation of the transformation of roles which marked the experiences of Jewish children during the November Pogrom. It is now a thirteen-year-old boy who is given responsibility for other children. Ruth further recalled that “the goodbyes were not tearful, Mother insisted that we would soon be reunited, and I waved to them until I could no longer see them.” This understated moment occurred in the lives of thousands of German-Jewish children.

Hilda Cohen-Rosenthal recalled how the moment of departure to the Netherlands was an incredibly uncomfortable moment for her. As Hilda’s family was “not a very kissing family,” she found it odd that “they all kissed me.” It is interesting in this post-war reflection that Hilda remembered the particularly emotional nature of the departure. In her later testimony, Hilda made no mention of her fears of leaving her home. Rather, like many children in her position, she noted the possibility that her parents might have known something she did not: the strong possibility that the Cohen family would never be reunited.

185 David, Child of Our Time, 43.
186 As quoted in Dwork, Children with a Star, 27.
By the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the so-called “children’s transports” had ceased and the Jewish children who remained in German territory faced a government and population that actively sought their removal from German territory. Ursula Pawel remarked that by 1940, “I already carried a lot of responsibility and, because of the difficult time in which I had grown up, I had matured far beyond my age”187. Children like fourteen-year-old Ursula no longer had the option to leave Germany, and by late-1941, faced deportation and extermination.

**Conclusion**

For Jewish children in Germany, the effects of the November Pogrom were wide-ranging. The arrest of Jewish fathers and the attack on Jewish children’s identities, through the imposition of ever radicalizing antisemitic laws, permanently altered family life for Jewish children in Nazi Germany. In the public sphere, the ban on Jewish children from attending German public schools alongside the increasing harassment of children on the streets provided the final blow against the formerly close bonds between Jewish and non-Jewish children. As Jewish families began to respond to these radical changes brought on by the November Pogrom, it became clear that there was no future for them in this new Germany. The primary solution was emigration.

Following the November Pogrom. German-Jewish children faced a changed world that reinforced the notion that Germany would continue to be hostile to its Jewish citizens. For those children who were lucky enough to emigrate, they faced a foreign land and a new culture. Yet not all Jewish children were so lucky. As this chapter demonstrated, it was those who emigrated who were able to testify to the horrors of the November Pogrom. For those children who

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remained in Germany through September 1939, they faced an uncertain future which would eventually lead to deportation mass extermination.
Conclusion

The effects of the November Pogrom on Jewish children were wide-ranging. The arrest of Jewish fathers and the attack on Jewish children’s identities, through the imposition of ever radicalizing antisemitic laws, permanently altered family life for Jewish children in Nazi Germany. In the public sphere, the ban on Jewish children from attending German public schools alongside the increasing harassment of children on the streets provided the final blow against the formerly close bonds between Jewish and non-Jewish children. As Jewish families began to respond to these radical changes brought on by the November Pogrom, it became clear that there was no future for them in this new Germany.

However, not all German Jews came to this conclusion. By the Summer 1941, approximately 25,000 Jewish children and youths under the age of twenty-five still lived within the pre-war borders of Germany. These children had radically different experiences than those who emigrated. Indeed, the November Pogrom marks a crucial dividing point in the experiences of German-Jewish children during the Holocaust. While those who left had to face a new world, Jewish children who continued to be ostracized in society. For many of them, daily life rapidly deteriorated.

By the end of the war in 1945, the Nazi regime and their collaborators murdered 91% of European Jewish children in what became known as the Holocaust. This historical fact demonstrates the importance of the topic examined in this thesis. As a large portion of

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188 Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 118. The Summer of 1941 is traditionally conceptualized by many historians as the approximate date when Hitler approved the directive to begin exterminating Europe’s Jewish population. See Christopher R. Browning, Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution, Rev. ed (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1991).
189 Deborah Dwork, Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 274. The author could not locate a statistic specific to pre-1939 Germany.
German-Jewish children were murdered by their own government, it is essential to qualify any examination of children who experienced the violence. This study does not claim to represent the experiences of all Jewish children who lived in Germany. Rather, it provides an account of how the events were remembered by children who survived this war. This important perspective invokes the close connection between memory and history and the ways in which the passage of time can inform our historical understanding.

Any study of the Holocaust is incredibly difficult, as it pushes both the writer and the reader to place themselves in a world where an artificially constructed racial hierarchy determined one’s ability to live or die. During the late-1930s, children took on a variety of roles during the violence and responded to state-sponsored antisemitism in unexpected ways. Through an examination of the actions of children during the November Pogrom, we have seen the ability of German-Jewish children to adapt to new and frightening circumstances. This phenomenon is key to understanding the lives of Jewish children under Nazi domination.

This thesis began with an examination of Jewish daily life prior to the November Pogrom from the perspective of children. We saw how children were integrated into their larger communities and the sources of ideological indoctrination which permeated their lives and the lives of their non-Jewish peers. Indeed, it was inside the classroom where we best viewed how Nazi propaganda affected Jewish and non-Jewish children in different ways. Outside of the classroom, a distinction emerged between Jewish and non-Jewish children, with organizations such as the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls acting as organizing tools for government-sponsored ideological indoctrination.
The central argument of this thesis was in chapter two, which analyzed the history of the November Pogrom from the perspective of German-Jewish children. Children were not only victims; they took initiative in order to secure the safety of their family and property and used their perception as powerless children by local official to further these goals. Additionally, the most vulnerable Jewish children, such as those in orphanages, were physically targeted during the violence and had to protect themselves without aid. This critical moment in the radicalization of Nazi antisemitic policy clearly forced Jewish children to respond to the violence in unique ways.

Yet this wave of mass violence in Germany was just the continuation of a chain of events that led to the end of daily life for Jewish children in Nazi Germany. Throughout all of these experiences we can see a consistent narrative: While children faced these trials with fear, many of them did so in unexpected ways. In the days following the November Pogrom, Jewish children served as messengers to their families and they helped their disfigured families survive. During the Kindertransporte, children left their homes alone to enter a new nation and culture. Jewish children's’ ability to withstand these assaults forced them to rapidly grow up and mature.

While the November Pogrom is one of the most studied events in the history of Nazi Germany, children’s narratives have not yet been fully explored. In this sense, the significance of this thesis can be read in the context of nuancing our understanding of how the Pogrom unfolded on an local level. However, the greater contribution of this study lies in its examination of individual experiences during a period of mass violence. The field of Holocaust Studies is inundated by numbers and statistics, and while a macro-level analysis of the events can be
incredibly revealing, individual experiences are often lost. This thesis is a testimony to those children whose stories have been lost in such analyses.

Aside from its study of the November Pogrom, and its historical context, from the perspective of German children, this thesis also uncovered numerous issues which are ripe for scholarly research. First among these suggestions for future research is a further examination of the early years of the Nazi regime from the perspective of Jewish and non-Jewish youths. Historians have extensively published on the experiences of Jewish children during the Holocaust itself, but more research needs to focus on the effect that state-sponsored antisemitism had on children prior to the November Pogrom.\footnote{Deborah Dwork’s \textit{Children with a Star} and Nicholas Stargardt’s \textit{Witnesses of War}, both heavily relied upon for this study, focus on the experiences of children in the later years of Nazi rule. This focus on the end stages of the Holocaust is not limited to studies on children, but can be generalized to the field of Holocaust studies as a whole. For more information, see Wendy Lower, “The History and Future of Holocaust Research,” Tablet Magazine, April 26, 2018, \url{https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/culture-news/260677/history-future-holocaust-research}.}

Additionally, when researching the experiences of German-Jewish children with their non-Jewish peers, historians must approach this history with an emphasis on interreligious interactions. Throughout the mid-1930s, Jewish children were deeply integrated in their communities, such as through their attendance at public schools. Studies which attempt to portray Jewish life in Nazi Germany in isolation from their non-Jewish neighbors fail to encapsulate the historical reality. Moving forward, this integrated history should be applied to the interactions between Jewish and non-Jewish children in Nazi Germany.

At the conclusion of her post-war interview, Ruth Herskovits-Gutmann, a survivor of Holocaust from Hanover was asked about how her experiences as a child in Nazi Germany influenced the course of her life. Ruth responded that “there are times when I...use the absolute
moral yardsticks of my childhood instead of the more forbearing judgments that so many situations, and especially the Nazi era, call for. Faith and doubt continue to be at war in me although it is the temptation of my childhood faith with its unfulfilled promises I struggle against most.”

Ruth’s struggle with the experiences of her childhood are representative of many of her Jewish peers. The conflicts of their past have deeply affected the course their lives, and even decades after the fall of the Third Reich, Jewish children who survived Nazi Germany continue to grapple with the horrors of their childhoods.

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**Appendix**  
**Photographs of Jewish Children**

This thesis examines the testimonies of approximately thirty-two German-Jewish children who experienced the November Pogrom and survived the Holocaust. In order to connect the reader to these testimonies, the author secured the photographs of seven of these children, which are included in the table below. Also included for reference is the age of the child during the November Pogrom and the page of this thesis where the experiences of the child are examined. Unless otherwise noted, all photos were pulled from the same sources as their respective testimonies, as cited in the bibliography. *Please note that many of the photos were taken over the few years prior to the November Pogrom and most are undated.*

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