From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk

WEIMAR AND NAZI FAMILY POLICY, 1918–1945

Fearing that the future of the nation was at stake following the First World War, German policymakers vastly expanded social welfare programs to shore up women and families. Just over a decade later, the Nazis seized control of the state and created a radically different, racially driven gender and family policy. This book explores Weimar and Nazi policy to highlight the fundamental, far-reaching change wrought by the Nazis and the disparity between national family policy design and its implementation at the local level. Relying on a broad range of sources – including court records, sterilization files, church accounts, and women's oral histories – it demonstrates how local officials balanced the benefits of marriage, divorce, and adoption against budgetary concerns, church influence, and their own personal beliefs. Throughout both eras, individual Germans collaborated with, rebelled against, and evaded state mandates, in the process fundamentally altering the impact of national policy.

Michelle Mouton is assistant professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1997. She is the recipient of the Fritz Stern Prize awarded by the German Historical Institute for the best dissertation in German History, on which this book is based. She has published articles in Central European History Journal, the Journal of Women's History, and the History Workshop Journal.
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This book is for my children,
Kirsten and Bjorn,
And for the memory of my father,
David Lynn Mouton (1932–1986)
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Abbreviations

BGB German Civil Code, *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*

BDF Federation of German Women’s Organizations, Bund Deutsche Frauenvereine

BDM League of German Girls, Bund Deutscher Mädel

BfM Federation for the Protection of Mothers, Bund Deutscher Mütterschutz

DDP German Democratic Party, Deutsche Demokratische Partei

DNVP German National People's Party, Deutschnationale Volkspartei

DVP German People's Party, Deutsche Volkspartei

EFH Protestant Women’s Aid Society, Evangelische Frauenhilfe

GEG Marriage Law for Greater Germany, *Groß Deutsches Ehegesetz*

HJ Hitler Youth, Hitler-Jugend

KPD Communist Party of Germany, Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands

NSDAP National Socialist German Workers’ Party, Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei

NSF National Socialist Women’s Organization, Nationalsozialistische Frauen Organization

NSV National Socialist People’s Welfare Organization, Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt

RBdKR Reich League of Child Rich Families, Reichsbund der kinderreichen Familien

RJWG Reich Youth Welfare Law, *Reichjugendwohlfahrtsgesetz*

RMD Reich Mother Service, Reichsmütterdienst

SA Nazi “Storm Front,” Sturmabteilung
Abbreviations

SD    Security Service, Sicherheitsdienst
Sopade    Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Party in Exile
SPD    Social Democratic Party of Germany, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SS    Nazi Paramilitary Organization, Schutzstaffel
USPD    Independent Socialist Party of Germany, Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
VFV    Patriotic Women’s Association, Vaterländische Frauenverein