

2020

Heinrich Himmler's solution to his homosexual question: Guiding the youth to resist temptation

Adam B. Grimm
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Grimm, Adam B., "Heinrich Himmler's solution to his homosexual question: Guiding the youth to resist temptation" (2020). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 18060.
<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/18060>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

Heinrich Himmler's solution to his homosexual question: Guiding the youth to resist temptation

by

Adam B. Grimm

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: History

Program of Study Committee:
John Monroe, Major Professor
Jeremy Best
April Eismann

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2020

Copyright © Adam Grimm, 2020. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY	1
CHAPTER 2. THE YOUNG HIMMLER AND THE WILHELINE DEBATES ON SEXUALITY	7
CHAPTER 3. HIMMLER'S MASCULINITY CRISES	14
CHAPTER 4. RÖHM'S THREAT TO HIMMLER'S SENSE OF MASCULINITY	22
CHAPTER 5. REFLECTIONS OF THE BAD TÖLZ	25
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION	34
BIBLIOGRAPHY	38

ABSTRACT

Like many German men that were raised in the late Wilhelmine period, Heinrich Himmler was too young to enter the German Imperial Army, and thus unable to fight in the Great War. Therefore, he was unable to prove his own masculinity through a soldierly experience at a time when there were ongoing debates about gender and sexuality in Germany. Himmler's inability to serve his nation left him to question his own masculinity, which triggered fears of homosexuality. Since he had grown up in a traditional conservative middle-class family his understanding of sexuality highlighted views of a brave, strong, and masculine man, which his personal diary entries at the time exemplified. His understanding of homosexuality was in stark contrast to his ideals and therefore emphasized a stereotype homosexual that was characterized as a cowardly, weak, effeminate man. The result of this homosexual stereotype in addition to his perceived heteronormative expectations for men led him to disregard any possibility that homosexuals could maintain masculine attributes. However, by the early 1930s his once close mentor, Ernst Röhm, had disproved Himmler's understanding that homosexuality was effeminate in nature. Röhm's masculine homosexual stereotype jeopardized Himmler's understanding of homosexuality and masculinity, which forced Himmler to maneuver his own understanding of sexuality to avoid both the masculine and effeminate stereotypes. Himmler's dilemma was a result of his early belief that homosexuals could not be masculine in nature, which he had contrasted against to help prove his own masculinity. Therefore, once he realized and accepted Röhm's "masculine" stereotype he had to distance himself from being connected to either stereotype. Himmler's famous Bad Tölz speech of 1937, a landmark in the history of Nazi persecution of homosexual men, represents his effort to deal with this issue. Analyzing it therefore sheds new light on Nazi attitudes toward gender and sexuality.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Throughout the twelve years of the Third Reich approximately 10 thousand homosexual men died due to a code of Nazi morality. At center stage of this Nazi Code against homosexuality was the SS Reichsführer, Heinrich Himmler. Himmler's hatred of the homosexual men was far beyond reasoning; for him, it was a homophobic obsession. Himmler's obsession seemed to have begun during a personal identity crisis between 1919-1922, where he sought to understand his own masculinity and sexuality in comparison to German society at the time.¹ In fact, while he sought to understand himself he also rationalized his ideas to fit his image of a model German citizen. Fifteen years after he rationalized his own identity he stated his view of the dangers of homosexuality and offered his solution for both the German youth and the younger men of the *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squads). On February 18th, 1937 Himmler gave a secret speech about homosexuality to his *SS-Gruppenführern* (Generals) in Bad Tölz, Germany. The speech was a continuation of his persecution of the homosexual community that developed after the 1933 Nazi seizure of power. In the summer and fall of 1934, Himmler and the Nazi party purged the known homosexuals within the party, state, and auxiliary forces. Then, between late 1934 through the secret speech in early 1937, Himmler specifically targeted what he felt was one of the most prolific areas that homosexuals had long since resided in, the Catholic Church. After his attack on the priests and the church he turned his attention to the German youth and especially his SS. The speech not only addressed the "homosexual problem" that he had noticed in Germany, but it also indicated that the national threat that he warned about was one that many

¹ Heinrich Himmler. *The Diaries of Heinrich Himmler 1914-1924*. Diary. Stanford University: Hoover Institute Archives, (Box 15, Folder 2) *Register of Heinrich Himmler Papers*. [Hereafter referred to as HHD]. The Diaries for Heinrich Himmler between 1914-1924 are incomplete. For this thesis, the notable missing sections include February 1920- November 1921.

German men struggled with during their adolescent years. Therefore, Himmler's infamous speech was meant to inform his Generals about how he wanted them to guide the young German men towards a virile Germanic state.

The primary focus of this thesis is Himmler's 1937 Bad Tölz speech, and how it related to his own understanding of German sexuality and masculinity. Furthermore, this thesis will also focus upon Himmler's diary entries during his early adulthood years to help establish how his own struggles shaped his later view of what he defined as being "normal." Firstly, Himmler initially did not fully understand that in Wilhelmine and Weimar culture, there were effeminate and masculine poles to the homosexual spectrum.² Instead during his own identity crisis he originally considered homosexuals as being effeminate, weak, and soft men. Secondly, the speech was an effort to reassure himself of what he envisioned as his own adherence to a vision of heteronormative masculinity. His vision derived from a combination of nineteenth century conservative ideas of proper gender roles and reactions against the radical questioning of those roles that characterized the late Wilhelmine and Weimar periods. Since his identity crisis he had rationalized his own masculinity and sexual identity in contrast to what he felt was an effeminate homosexual. Thirdly, by the homosexual purge in 1934 he realized and accepted that there were at least two major models that homosexuals could identify with. The models were two stereotypes within a general spectrum that allowed for effeminate and hyper-masculine possibilities to exist. Then, because of these two main possibilities, he had to maneuver between

² Contrary to what society would have considered a person's relation within the homosexual community could be, homosexuals could identify to an effeminate or a masculine model. Both models offered stereotyped characteristics of those members within them. However, the models themselves were not binary. As the discourse of defining homosexuality progressed during the early 20th century, so did the understanding that a homosexual was not necessarily either, but in fact was somewhere within a broad spectrum of possibilities between the two.

them for his own sexual and masculine re-assurances. Lastly, Himmler used the Bad Tölz speech to project his interpretation of sexuality upon the existing German youth. In theory, Himmler felt that by using the speech he could help them avoid being, as he saw it, misled towards homosexuality.

Although homosexuality has not undergone the same amount of investigation as other primary targets of the Third Reich, it has been subject to much historical study. Many scholars contrast Himmler's obsession with homosexuality to his desire to embody a constructed standard of "normality," which involved following traditional gender roles that only permitted heterosexual relationships that would aid in maintaining a healthier German nation. Peter Loewenberg and George Mosse have contributed significantly to exploring the Reichsführer's obsession with homosexuality and his understanding of "normality." Loewenberg's 1971 psycho-analysis of the Reichsführer, *The Unsuccessful Adolescence of Heinrich Himmler*, argued that Himmler's interpretation of masculinity and femininity confused his identification of being a man by mixing homoerotic desires and a homosocial environment.³ Furthermore, Loewenberg argued that with this confusion, the Nazi ideology was the only way Himmler could solve his identity crisis and maintain a sense that he was conforming to what he saw as "normality."⁴ Then, in 1985, George Mosse published *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability & Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, where he claimed that Himmler's identity was built by contrasting masculinity and homosexuality.⁵ Here, Mosse emphasized the need for respectability within

³ Homoeroticism pertains to a physical attraction to an individual of the same gender, whereas homosociality pertains to social relationships with the same gender.

⁴ Loewenberg, Peter. "The Unsuccessful Adolescence of Heinrich Himmler." *The American Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (1971): 325, 640, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1851620>.

⁵ George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1997).

conservative German society in the early 1900s. Furthermore, he argued that sexuality was a key area in which this “respectability” was expressed. Deviation from respectability, in Mosse’s view, became a key element of what was considered “abnormal.”

Tim Pursell’s and Thomas Kühne’s publications on masculinity and sexuality also contribute to the general discussion of what was considered “normal” relations between two men. Pursell’s 2008 *Queer eyes and Wagnerian Guys: Homoeroticism in the Art of the Third Reich* also argued Nazi society was built upon images and ideals of what was masculine and manly. He emphasized that the Nazis embraced an idea of the hyper-masculine rooted in German culture, which included depicting men in a homoerotic light. Pursell drew heavily upon Richard Wagner’s works, which established an idealized conception of manliness that blurred the lines between heterosexuality and homosexuality in ways that would later manifest themselves in Nazi culture. Thomas Kühne’s 2017 *The Rise and Fall of Comradeship* discussed this masculine sense of normality even further as he argued about the changes in comradeship in German society. He built upon earlier ideas by Michael Kimmel that part of being a man was not being like a woman.⁶ Furthermore, he argued that this unity between men was ambiguous, or open to interpretation. Therefore, Kühne’s argument of comradeship would incorporate Pursell’s argument insofar that men of any sexuality could interpret themselves as being like their comrades, thus “normal” as well. Moreover, the result of these two author’s claims would eventually hold as key components of Himmler’s identity crisis.

More recent publications on Himmler and sexuality in Nazi Germany have shifted to investigate homosexuality as it related to more specific cases and examples that would have been

⁶ Kühne Thomas. *The Rise and Fall of Comradeship: Hitlers Soldiers, Male Bonding and Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017, 6.

influential upon the Reichsführer. Burkhard Jellonek, Jeffery Giles, and Eleanor Hancock all discussed homosexuals as a targeted group for persecution by Himmler throughout his 1930s rise to head of the SS. In 1990, Jellonek's publication of *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz: die Verfolgung von Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich* (Homosexuality under the Swastika: the Persecution of Homosexuals in the Third Reich) expanded on both Loewenberg and Mosse's arguments, connecting Himmler and sexuality to argue the experience of the persecuted homosexual as influenced by Himmler's intense desire to impose his personal conception of a heteronormative gender order. Jeffery Giles' 2002 publication of *The Denial of Homosexuality: Same-Sex Incidence in Himmler's SS and Police* highlighted the cases of homosexuality within the SS and how Himmler himself was likely a latent homosexual. Furthermore, through his argument about Himmler's own sexuality, Giles was also able to link the Reichsführer's persecution of the community to his own sexual impulses, which further established Himmler's motives. Alongside both Jellonek and Giles' arguments Eleanor Hancock continued to build on the importance of Himmler's own sexuality as she emphasized the implications of SA Chief of Staff Ernst Röhm's known homosexuality. In 1998 she published an article titled "Only the Real, the True, the Masculine Held its Value: Ernst Röhm, Masculinity, and Male Homosexuality", after which she then published *Ernst Röhm: Hitler's SA Chief of Staff* in 2008.⁷ Hancock's investigations into Röhm and his relation to the early Nazi State thus allow for further investigations into his relationship and mentorship of Himmler.

Major biographical works by Peter Padfield and Peter Longerich have also shed light upon Himmler's obsession and desires, as they have brought together a multitude of information

⁷ Eleanor Hancock also wrote an introduction to Ernst Röhm's 2012 autobiographical edition of *The Memoirs of Ernst Röhm*.

to reconstruct the experiences and life of Himmler. Padfield's 1990 biography recounted the Reichsführer's life and eventual role in Hitler's Final Solution. Much of his work was heavily derived from secondary sources, which did not elaborate on his sexuality, masculinity, and overall sense of "normality". Later investigations of the Reichsführer, the SS, and historical events surrounding Himmler's activities have brought newer and more credible evaluations to the man that was head of Hitler's notorious SS. Peter Longerich's 2012 *Heinrich Himmler*, investigated much further into Himmler's early personal life, incorporating extensive research into Himmler's adolescent diaries. Longerich also investigated Himmler's letters, memoirs, speeches, and directives. His analysis revealed a much deeper understanding of how Himmler was implicated in the rise of the Third Reich through his sense of what was normal and acceptable to a healthy society. Longerich noted Himmler's preoccupation with sexuality and masculinity as both played a role in his rise to power. Furthermore, he used Himmler's 1937 speech to help argue that the Reichsführer had been subjected to homosexual temptations, and therefore his attacks upon the homosexual community derived from his own insecurities.⁸ The research surrounding Himmler completed by the array of authors and biographers also incorporated two additional historians' analyses of Himmler's diaries. First, Bradley F. Smith's and Werner T. Angress' 1959 co-authored journal article: *Diaries of Heinrich Himmler's Early Years*, which was later followed by Bradley F. Smith's 1971 *Heinrich Himmler A Nazi in the Making, 1900-1926*. Both Angress and Smith's publications specifically targeted Himmler's early diaries from 1914 through 1924 and built upon them a foundation for later investigations into Himmler's key adolescent years, where he struggled with understanding what was normal.

⁸ Longerich, Peter. *Heinrich Himmler*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 236.

CHAPTER 2. THE YOUNG HIMMLER AND THE WILHELINE DEBATES ON SEXUALITY

Heinrich Himmler was born in München, Germany on October 7th, 1900 to Gebhard Himmler, Sr. and Anna Maria Himmler. Gebhard's strict school teacher personality enabled Heinrich to grow up in an astute, firm, and serious environment. As a child Heinrich was often sick and weak, and therefore he missed a lot of schooling; However, with his father's insistence, he still managed to complete his coursework and meet his educational expectations. Even while he was on family holidays, Heinrich had to maintain his educational development by reading and eventually keeping a *Tagebuch* (diary) for his daily activities. Unfortunately for him, his father diligently read and corrected his grammar and spelling, which meant that the diary was not an intimate reflection of the thoughts and concerns of the early adolescent boy. However, by the time he had reached his identity crisis in 1919, his entries had become more intimate, which suggests that his father no longer read his personal thoughts. Therefore, the crucial diary entries between the fall of 1919 through the summer of 1922 allow for a glimpse of his sexual identity crisis that he reflected upon during his secret speech on homosexuality as Reichsführer in 1937.

Considering Himmler's birth in 1900, his childhood and adolescent years coincided with the emerging national debates on sexuality within German society. Amongst the leading social scientists examining non-heterosexual practices, was the German psychologist, Richard Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902). Krafft-Ebing's 1886 *Psychopathia Sexualis* examined the fundamental interpretations of sexuality within society, and later served as a starting point for subsequent debates. Discussions of sexuality in the 19th century revolved around defining what degeneracy was in relation to a "healthy" and "normal" citizen. Krafft-Ebing argued that homosexual desires could be "acquired" through activities such as onanism, which he believed caused neurasthenia and then potential homosexual behavior. Similarly, another German psychiatrist,

Alfred Hoche, argued in 1896 that seduction by other homosexuals was potentially an additional path towards homosexuality. However, in contrast to acquired cases that Krafft-Ebing discussed, *Psychopathia Sexualis* also addressed the possibility that non-heterosexuality was “congenital”, and thus could also be innate in the individual. In either case, Krafft-Ebing’s conclusion was that these deviances were in-part due to an individual’s degree of susceptibility, which consisted of degenerate traits that were passed through heredity.

After Krafft-Ebing’s death, leading scientists and politicians continued their discussions of sexuality, either advocating for or opposing homosexual rights. The German scientist, eugenicist, and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935), for instance, represented and defended the homosexual individuals’ rights through a series of publications and court proceedings around the beginning of the century. Hirschfeld’s promotion of homosexual rights during the 1906 Eulenburg Affair politicized the ongoing debates, which in return threatened members of the conservative elite. The Eulenburg “homosexual scandal” coincided with the new debates on gender and sexuality reinforcing conservative fears of the country’s failure to maintain and reinforce a stronger masculine society. Unfortunately for conservative Germans, who found the whole controversy shameful, these debates, and especially the arguments of advocates of homosexuals like Hirschfeld, gave foreign nations the impression that homosexuality was a German disease or a German vice. Foreign press further emphasized this claim, mocking Germany and blaming German ideas for the rise of homosexuals within their own countries. By 1909, and in light of the Eulenburg Affair, the conservative middle-class German press called for the dismissal of all homosexuals from official positions in the government. One of the leading opponents of Hirschfeld was the coalition of the Catholic men’s associations, who along with opposing eugenicists and conservatives, rebutted Hirschfeld’s

advocacy by inciting a moral panic. According to these conservatives, German society's toleration of homosexuality undermined traditional morality, societal norms, and national stability. Therefore, the result of the growing interest in questions of sexuality and sexual freedom within German society motivated each side to justify its position and educate the general public.

Between 1900-1934, Magnus Hirschfeld contributed to this debate in a variety of ways. First, his arguments built on predecessors' theories about the nature and origins of homosexuality in the second half of the 19th Century and not of Christian morality. Hirschfeld, who was both Jewish and a feminist, co-established the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific Humanitarian Committee), WhK in addition to the "Yearbook for Sexual Intermediate Types" (*Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen, Jahrbuch*) in 1897. Then, both through the committee and the *Jahrbuch*, Hirschfeld and his colleagues published updated information on their sexuality studies. In 1904 Hirschfeld published his theory of homosexuality being a third sex in Berlin's Third Sex and later wrote articles about his research on homosexuals during the Great War. Lastly, in 1919, he also established the *Institute für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sexual Science) in Berlin, which is where he continued investigation of the community and compiled all of the documentation on the attending patients, research, and findings. Hirschfeld's work both advanced the general homosexual discourse and marked him as a primary target for homophobes, anti-Semites, and anti-feminists.

Magnus Hirschfeld argued against a variety of old unproven theories that tried to link homosexuals to people who practiced onanism. For instance, he argued against theories that claimed masturbation and seduction were acquired paths towards homosexuality, and instead supported the view that homosexuality was innate and heritable. Hirschfeld's scientific evidence

for his onanism claim derived from two points. On the one hand, those who practiced the self-pleasing act were just as likely to be a homosexual as those who did not; while on the other hand, his study of 94 cases of people practicing onanism, only one had turned out to be a homosexual. He also claimed that there was no scientific evidence to support counter arguments that onanism caused mental illness, and that the previous theories were based upon ignorance or traditional belief rather than science. Furthermore, he argued, homosexuality was not scientifically linked to degeneracy, but rather natural and innate. Therefore, homosexuals should have the same rights as heterosexuals.

As the homosexual debates continued to expand before the Nazi takeover in early 1933, differences in opinions among advocates produced several factions. Adolf Brand (1874-1945) for instance, split with Hirschfeld and the WhK in 1903 and then established the *Gemeinschaft der Eigene* (The Society of the Self-Determined), GdE. Brand's decision to split with Hirschfeld was based on his own faction's definition of homosexuality, which advocated for a masculine model of homosexuality derived from Ancient Greek ideals of love between older men and adolescent boys. Brand also published his theories on homosexuality in his own journal, *Der Eigene* (Self-determined), which was founded in 1896. However, by the 1920s *Der Eigene* and the GdE increasingly published and promoted nationalist and racist views, such as the blood and soil rhetoric that the National Socialists promoted. Coinciding with the GdE views towards the rising nationalist agenda was their agreement with the WhK over changing Germany's homosexual criminalization code, Paragraph (§) 175. The code itself was adopted by the Wilhelmine government when German nation was established in 1871, and had since become a major target of criticism among many advocates of homosexual rights within Germany. The GdE members' attraction to some Nazi ideas, along with many of their members' willingness to work with the

WhK to revise the criminal code eventually led to confusion for Nazi authorities over what homosexuality was, and whether it should be defined as being more effeminate or masculine.

One of the early advocates of the GdE and Brand's interpretation of homosexuality was Hans Blüher (1888-1955). Blüher wrote and theorized ideas based around the German youth culture and in particular the *Wandervogel* (Wandering Bird) group that he had been a member of during his own adolescence. Blüher's contributions to the masculine model of homosexuality brought additional attention and panic to the early 1910s debates about the role of homosexuals within the German youth culture, since he had argued that sexual developmental freedom should remain within the overall youth movement organizations. As a whole the Youth Culture (*Jugendkultur*) movement was interested in allowing adolescents more autonomy with their wilderness excursions. Furthermore, adolescents themselves had also been discussing their own position to educate themselves and to avoid the direction of adult guidance. One method to discuss their position openly amongst one another was through their journal, *Der Anfang* (The Beginning); however, their use of the journal also led to an increase in the moral panic. In early 1914 the journal publications of the adolescent discussions brought the debates into the country's political system as the Conservative Catholics suggested that *Der Anfang* was subverting the youth culture by linking them to the Social Democrats. The dispute in question was that the Social Democrats were advocating for more freedom for the youth, while the conservatives wanted adult supervised youth organizations.

The influence of this moral panic upon the Himmler family would have logically connected with their traditional, religious, and middle-class conservative values. For instance, as the feminist and homosexual movements continued to gain ground around the turn of the century, they resulted in a blurring of gender lines, as traditional male and female roles in society

merged together. The blurred gender lines jeopardized both masculinity and male dominance, which many conservatives would have seen as a loss of general control and stability in the heavily masculine nationalist states. Furthermore, Hirschfeld's 1904 Berlin's Third Sex contributed to the fears of the morality movement, as he claimed that there were homosexuals in all parts of society. The Eulenburg Affair, two years later, validated Hirschfeld's claim and proved to the moralist movement that there was a serious threat to their values. The combined result of Hirschfeld's book, the Eulenburg Affair, along with homosexual debates therefore justified the fears of the morality movement, which in return would influence the Himmler family. Although Heinrich Himmler was not likely to have been aware of many of the moralist movement's counter arguments during his early childhood years, he would have been knowledgeable about the arguments made just before and during the Great War. His personal awareness of the homosexual debates during this time would have at least come from the moralists' political and moral concerns about the *Jugendkultur*. Consequently, the debates sparked a period of national attention and then a political referendum that led to the eventual Bavarian ban on *Der Anfang* in 1914. Since the disputes over the *Jugendkultur* had become nationalized the concern to the middle-class conservative parents of three adolescent Himmler boys would have been nearly unavoidable.

Once the Great War began in July 1914 the moral panic had long since swept across Germany's conservative middle-class. Therefore, this demographic more than their opposition would have likely felt a greater need to prove their masculinity through the experiences of war. Yet, by the fall revolutions and Armistice of 1918, the country's conservative values disintegrated, after which the progressive Weimar Republic established its control. Imperial Germany's collapse and the rise of the new republic resulted in a state of uncertainty and for the

conservative middle-class, a total break of traditional morality. Their fear in breaking with morality was validated by the influential eugenicist Wilhelm Schallmayer, who suggested Germany's loss in the war was similar to the ancient Greek and Roman Empires' decline, all due to homosexuality.

The result of the changing attitude towards sexuality in Germany escalated during the Weimar Republic. The government's more progressive stance on sexuality allowed the sexual institute to investigate soldiers' reflections of their homosexual experiences during the Great War. Throughout the 1920s Hirschfeld, Brand, Blüher and other homosexual advocates pressed their desires to remove § 175 with the aid of the sexual institute's research and investigations. However, the rise of the nationalist parties brought a renewed attack upon the sexual freedoms of Germany by eugenicists that would use untested theories and old opinion to support their work. In 1921 three eugenicists, Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz, published *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene* (Principles of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene), which set forth a new foundation for eugenics in Germany that accepted old theories of the degenerative nature of homosexuality. For example they claimed that "homosexuality was not a normal variant (of heredity), as some of its defenders tend to put it, but something very sick because it affects preservation to a great extent."⁹ The authors' point here was that since homosexuality was a sign of degeneracy, and since it did not allow for continued reproduction of the population, then it effected the nation's potential for more families. Sixteen years after the book was published Himmler referred to the theory during his speech, as his opening statements expanded upon the potential population growth if homosexuals were dealt with.

⁹ Baur, Erwin, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz. *Grundriss Der Menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre Und Rassenhygiene*. München: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, (1921), 239.

CHAPTER 3. HIMMLER'S MASCULINITY CRISES

Heinrich Himmler's diary entries between 1914 and 1924 show that he was both eager to prove his masculinity and to be treated like an adult.¹⁰ Furthermore, they show that he desired to prove his masculinity through a soldierly experience; however, his inability to do so in combat led him to consider alternatives.¹¹ The main three alternatives that he attempted were through self-control and discipline in sexual matters, the sport of fencing, and as a last resort through struggle and hardship by living in Eastern Europe.

Himmler's alternative to prove himself through self-control and discipline came about through his interest in meeting women. However, he still believed in maintaining his abstinence, and since he grew up with the moral panic propaganda, onanism was not an acceptable alternative to any type of sexual release either. Furthermore, during the crucial months of the fall of 1919 he had become increasingly obsessed with proving his masculinity, so he needed to find a solution that would also avoid what he considered to be unmanly. His eventual solution to his dilemma was to promote self-control and discipline, and to maintain his loyalty to his conservative ideals and religious beliefs. Yet, the changes in German society throughout the early 1900s allowed the youth to engage in more non-conforming homosexual practices than what the traditional conservative courtships expected. The change of behavior had long since been established as activists for the homosexual movement fought with moralists over homosexual rights. Since the advocates of the moral panic appealed to members of the Catholic faith, the adolescent Himmler believed he needed to maintain his abstinence and self-control for

¹⁰ HHD.

¹¹ HHD. The Reichsführer's interest in being a soldier was a lifelong desire that began no later than the start of the Great War and lasted until his suicide in 1945. Like many of his peers that were born too late for active duty, Himmler struggled to fully relate with those who did.

his faith. However, exposure to more liberal ideas and debates in the press led him to contemplate the same arguments for himself and for all German youths.¹² Once the Great War ended and the Weimar republic was established, the liberal and progressive agenda grew, and along with it, sexual acceptance for homosexuality increased as well. Therefore, Himmler, who had since become more independent from his parents, felt threatened by the disappearance of his middle-class conservative values. This threat worried him enough for him to engage more in political discussions along with his developing love interests.

Himmler's concern over any type of sexual release during the late fall of 1919 was also compounded by his short-lived crushes on Luisa Hager followed by Maja Loritz.¹³ The two women were the subject of Himmler's first love entries in his diary and consequently emphasized his desire to prove his manliness. However, despite his desire for a relationship with either woman, he did not allude to a sexual relationship in his diary. Instead, he clung to his assertion that he needed to maintain his self-control and discipline. The two crushes coincided with the period of time that he was focusing on "self-control", which Peter Lowenberg psycho-analyzed as a sexual release through onanism.¹⁴ Unfortunately for Himmler, he was unable to build a solid relationship with either woman, which continued to strain his desires to prove his masculinity by

¹² HHD, 30 June 1922.

¹³ HHD, October 1919- December 1919. Himmler had known Luisa Hagen for several years, but apparently only developed an interest in her that fall. His crush on Luisa seemed to have peaked during the last two weeks of October. However, while his interest was at this peak Himmler was also taking notice of Maja and writing about her in his diary. Therefore, as his interest in Luisa decreased and eventually ended in early November, his new interest in Maja overtook her spot. Then, as he spent more and more time with Maja throughout early and mid-November, she became the target of his love. By mid-November Himmler's diary was constantly focusing on Maja, who he had apparently fallen in love with. However, by late November and early December, Maja had made it clear that there was not a fruitful relationship, and that she was going to be moving away in January.

¹⁴ Peter Loewenberg, *The Unsuccessful Adolescence of Heinrich Himmler*, 1971.

the way of a heterosexual relationship. As a result of his heightened sexual frustration Himmler panicked and worried that if he did not figure out a solution to his concerns then he could easily drift into an unhealthy path towards perverse sexual behavior.¹⁵ Therefore, he began searching for solutions that could help him establish his own masculinity and to quell any of his concerns.

The temporary solution to Himmler's struggles with his masculine identity in 1919 and his continued desire of self-control was to move East.¹⁶ He felt that by moving east he could prove his masculinity through struggle and hardship while working in the remote countryside.¹⁷ However, his interest in moving to the East was considerably odd due to the ongoing Russian Civil War and the rise of communism throughout the world.¹⁸ Up through this point he had grown up in an environment that heavily focused upon maintaining their middle class standing. Himmler's own Godfather, Prince Heinrich, was a prime example of how the Himmler family strove to maintain their social standing. Thus, the future Reichsführer's interest to move east and to become a farmer there would have been a considerable demotion to his family's reputation, not to mention his own emerging conservative political interests.

Six days after his initial diary entry of moving east, he began noting that he was learning Russian. Between November 17th, 1919 and January 13th, 1920 he referenced working on his Russian language skills in 23 separate diary entries.¹⁹ However, his desire to move to Russia was

¹⁵ Richard Kraft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*. p 287. The practice of onanism had been linked by Krafft-Ebing to weakness and being unmanly in his *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Therefore, Himmler would have likely associated the practice in onanism with that of homosexuals, which would have also been reinforced by his beliefs that homosexuals lacked self-control.

¹⁶ HHD, 11 November 1919. Himmler's first entry about moving east to start a new life was on November 11th, 1919; however, six days later he began learning Russian, as he apparently decided that Russia would be a good place to restart his life.

¹⁷ HHD, 8 December 1919.

¹⁸ During the Russian Civil War Germany sided with the Allies in hopes of defeating the Communist Revolution.

¹⁹ HHD.

more of an act of desperation rather than that of true intention, as the interest in the language and the idea mostly coincided in the rise and fall of his interest in Maja. For instance, after a particularly frustrating day on December 8th, 1919, he entered that he would just move to Russia alone, if he was unable to find a woman in Germany.²⁰ This act of desperation is solidified even further, as the German forces in Eastern Europe withdrew from Latvia on November, 20th and then Lithuania on December, 16th of that same year. Furthermore, between the German troops withdraw from Lithuania and January 13th, 1919, Himmler wrote an additional nine entries in his diary that he was still learning Russian.²¹ Evidently, he still believed the Allies would defeat the Communists and that he could settle in the land and prove his masculinity through the struggle and hardships there.

The intended solution to Himmler's masculine concerns was to become involved in institutions and organizations that promoted a disciplined soldierly persona. That past April, 1919, he had joined the *Freikorps Landshut* and *Freikorps Oberland* (Free Corps) where he had hoped to continue with at least some soldierly activity.²² Then, in early November and December 1919 he occasionally began entering joyful comments in his diary about being on alert or drill while in uniform.²³ In addition to his membership within both *Freikorps* he also joined the dueling fraternity Apollo. By doing so he was able to further develop his soldierly persona through his involvement in the fraternity activities and his later fencing practices in early 1922.²⁴

²⁰ Longerich, 37.

²¹ HHD.

²² Smith, *Heinrich Himmler: A Nazi in the Making, 1900-1926*, 64-66. The *Freikorps Landshut* and *Freikorps Oberland* were regional auxiliary military groups that were not attached to the German Government.

²³ HHD, 7 November, 1 December 1919.

²⁴ HHD, November 1919 - November 1921. Himmler's diary entry notes that he joined the Apollo group on November 19th, 1919. Then, on the 23rd of November he mentions meeting the members and writing his application; however, he does not steadily mention actual fencing

Unfortunately for Himmler, this particular solution would take an extended period of time to achieve, since he would first need to learn fencing and then rise to a level where he could officially duel.

The unintended solution to Himmler's masculine concerns turned out to be going to parties and halls to dance. According to Bradley Smith's investigation on Himmler's personal life at this time, Himmler's physician, Dr. Quenstedt had recently recommended dancing as an activity to help with his poor heart conditions.²⁵ Despite his doctor's recommendation, he did not begin dancing until November 21st, 1919, just two days after he joined the Apollo dueling fraternity.²⁶ Similar to his attentiveness to noting his Russian lessons at this time, he also began noting his dance session.²⁷ Then, coinciding with the decline of studying Russian in late December 1919 and through his last entry about learning the language on January 13th, 1920, the entries over dancing steadily increased. The change of activities in his diary shows that his desperate interest in moving to Russia had likely been resolved due to the rise of his interest in dancing. Between January 13th and the 25th he spoke of dancing on eight separate dates, which included two days that he noted his achievement of learning the "Boston dance".²⁸ The eight entries over the twelve day period compared to only 17 entries from his initial entry on November 21st, 1919 through January 11th, 1920 shows that he discovered the value of dancing as an acceptable solution to his identity crisis. Moreover, once the diary entries picked up again

lessons until November 18th, 1921.

²⁵ Smith, *Heinrich Himmler: A Nazi in the Making, 1900-1926*, 82; HHD, September 1919. According to Himmler's entries from the beginning of September 1919 through 20th of the month, he had been sick and had spent time in and out of the hospital.

²⁶ HHD, 21 November 1919.

²⁷ HHD, November 1919 - January 1920. From the end of November through the end of this section of Himmler's diary he noted dancing on 27 different occasions.

²⁸ HHD. 20, 22 January 1920.

in November 1921 his entries of dancing remained very positive and consistent through mid-January of 1922, which is when his entries about fencing practice became most prominent.²⁹ This reveals that the dancing played a major role in building his masculine identity until he was finally able to have his official fencing duel on June 17th, 1922.³⁰ The coinciding dates between Maja's rising disinterest, starting Russian, joining Apollo, and beginning dance lessons suggest that the peak of his identity crisis was in November 1919. Therefore, any homosexual concerns that he had of himself likely peaked during this period, after which his concerns steadily declined while leading closer to his eventual duel.

The unintended solution to prove Himmler's masculinity operated under the principle that dancing was still a way to enact gender roles within traditional conservative society. In theory he was able to go to the dance halls to meet and talk with the women, while not having to get any closer to them unless he felt that the current woman was the right one, meaning the right woman to settle down with.³¹ Here, his diary entries are key to understanding how he was interacting, judging, and then leaving them at the end of the evening.³² For example, on June 10th, 1922 he noted his thoughts about several women that he had met at a dance hall, and how he had a good conversation with some of them while dancing.³³ However, after each of the diary entries of the women, he declined to speak of them any further, which highlighted his new ability to have conversations with them, and then to let them go if he was not interested. This outlet to

²⁹ HHD.

³⁰ HHD, 17 June 1922.

³¹ HHD, 6 June 1922.

³² Throughout this period of Himmler's life and especially during his identity crisis he was judging and categorizing all the women that he was encountering. In doing so, he was deciding who the healthiest women were, and therefore, which women would be ideal to establish the purist Germanic family with.

³³ HHD, 10 June 1922.

meet and to get to know women allowed him to build his confidence by talking with them, while not hastily entering a relationship. Furthermore, this outlet also allowed him to maintain his abstinence, through self-control, discipline, and loyalty to his ideals.

In the fall of 1919 Himmler's struggles to establish his masculinity led him to doubt his sexuality, which in returned provoked fear of apparent homosexual temptations. His fears were then circumstantially validated in early 1920 when he read *The Priest and the Acolyte*. The story was about a priest who fell in love with an adolescent boy after which he questioned his faith.³⁴ The book was especially threatening to Himmler due to his own deep Catholic faith and his own questioning of his faith due to his interests in dueling.³⁵ The connection between the two was that he wanted to prove his masculinity in part by dueling, and that the church was against it. In theory, he pinned his faith against his desires to prove his masculinity, and by the time he read the book in early March 1920, he had since been leaning towards proving his masculinity.³⁶ He could therefore relate to the priest as they both had considered themselves devout Catholics, and then they both questioned their faith for their sexual identity.³⁷

³⁴ John Francis. Bloxam and Stuart Mason, "*The Priest and the Acolyte: with an Introductory Protest by Stuart Mason*" (London: The Lotus Press, 1907): <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010824032>. John Francis Bloxam's book *The Priest and the Acolyte* is about a Catholic Priest that through giving Confession slowly falls in love with a 14-year-old boy. The short book progresses with both the boy and the priest developing an intimate relationship, which the priest's congregation and fellow priest realized. The book concludes with the priest questioning his beliefs and the Church, due to his love for the boy, and by both the boy and him committing suicide for their forbidden love.

³⁵ HHD, 26 December 1919.

³⁶ Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 38.

³⁷ HHD, 26 December 1919. Himmler revealed his devotion to the Catholic faith by a variety of his diary entries that reaffirmed his intent to stay loyal through early 1920. Then, after he read Bloxam's book he began questioning his faith for at least another four years. Up until the end of his diary entries in 1924, he occasionally mentioned his activities with the church, which shows his devotion slowly dwindled as he became more politically active and radical.

While Himmler struggled to prove his masculinity between the fall of 1919 through the summer of 1922, he also searched for reasons as to why he had self-doubt. Yet, it was not until he began persecuting Catholicism in the mid-1930s that his scapegoat of his past religious influence became noticeable. Clues as to his later blame for his sexual frustration had developed in late 1919, when his spiritual beliefs came in direct conflict to proving his masculinity. Throughout that fall and winter he often wrote of his devotion to God, and that somehow God would help him through his difficult times.³⁸ However, since he eventually sided with his dueling interest over his faith in early 1920, and then read Bloxam's story shortly thereafter, his respect for Catholicism slowly decreased throughout the 1920s. Therefore, showing that the more he solidified his masculinity the more he blamed the church for his past insecurities.

³⁸ HHD, fall 1919.

CHAPTER 4. RÖHM'S THREAT TO HIMMLER'S SENSE OF MASCULINITY

The early 1930s challenged Himmler's understanding of homosexuality due to his past mentorship and friendship with SA leader Ernst Röhm. Since 1923 and 1924 the future Reichsführer had maintained a close relation with Röhm, as the latter had become a mentor to the former's soldierly and political interests.³⁹ However, Himmler's awareness of Röhm's homosexuality would eventually jeopardize and destroy their relationship. As head of the SS through the months of campaigning and a central figure of the movement, Himmler would have been quite aware of campaign smears against the Nazi Party by the means of Ernst Röhm's sexuality. The Socialist controlled *Münchener Post* initially outed Röhm in April of 1931 and then again two months later on June 24th. Then, nearly a year after the first publication of Röhm's sexuality came the incriminating Heimsoth Letters reproduced by the Echo Magazine on March 9th, 1932.⁴⁰ Therefore, during the NSDAP's time of struggles, Himmler had to shape his SS into a mold that distanced itself from Röhm and the masculine homosexual. The result of Himmler's new task however, led him to navigate his interpretation of homosexuality between his own masculine identity and the masculine homosexual stereotype that Röhm represented.

³⁹ HHD, 15 February 1924; Röhm Ernst and Eleanor Hancock, *The Memoirs of Ernst Röhm*, trans. Geoffrey Brooks (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2012), 1. Röhm and Himmler initially met in 1922 after which their friendship grew. Röhm was an ideal role model to the impressionable Himmler, due to his strong soldierly experiences. The future SA leader had been wounded both in the face and in the chest from active duty in the Great War. Röhm's deep facial scars would have represented a man that had performed his masculine duty to the fullest. Therefore, there should be no surprise that Himmler would have initially looked up to Röhm as a role model, while he continued to develop his extremist views.

⁴⁰ Röhm, Ernst, and Helmut Klotz. *Der Fall Röhm*. Berlin-Tempelhof: Dr. Helmut Klotz, 1932. The Heimsoth letters were a group of letters that Röhm had discussed his sexuality with Dr. Karl-Günther Heimsoth during the winter of 1928 and 1929. The letters spoke of Röhm's desire to meet Hans Blüher in addition to supporting the removal of § 175 of German law. The letters incriminated Röhm's sexuality as Dr. Helmut Klotz used them to expose the hypocrisy in the Nazi Party.

Therefore, from the latest point of March 1932 he could not promote policies that jeopardized his own interpretation of his masculine identity, nor could he approve anything that would connect him too closely with Röhm's stereotype.

Himmler and Röhm's relationship through the early 1930s was complicated and to Himmler, threatening. Unfortunately for the Reichsführer he could not just turn on Röhm due to the latter's control of the SA, and Hitler's need of the SA. Therefore, between March of 1932 and the Night of the Long Knives in 1934, Himmler had to both distance himself and maintain a relationship with his former mentor. The result of his dilemma led him to contradictory behavior towards the homosexual community. For instance, in 1933 he had shut down the homosexual clubs, which he later reflected upon during the opening sentence of his speech.⁴¹ Furthermore, on May 6th, 1933 Nazi demonstrators destroyed Hirschfeld's Sexual Institute in Berlin. Despite the Reichsführer not taking credit for the institute's destruction during his speech, he later alluded to the amount of knowledge that the Gestapo gained by Hirschfeld's research.⁴²

In contrast to his thoughts and actions of early 1933, Himmler also accepted a continued connection to Röhm just six weeks after the institute's destruction. On June 17th, 1933 Himmler's second in command, *Gruppenführer* (Major-General) Reinhard Heydrich, named his first son's godfather Ernst Röhm.⁴³ Considering that Röhm was the Chief of Staff of the SA, Heydrich's pick was logical while the SA remained an asset to the Nazi movement. Yet, once the party turned on Röhm during the Night of the Long Knives a year later, Himmler quickly detached himself from his former mentor, and subsequently began his direct attacks on the

⁴¹ Heinrich Himmler, "Heinrich Himmler- Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders," trans. G F H. (February 18, 1937): paragraph 1.

⁴² Ibid, 11.

⁴³ Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2012), 55.

homosexual community. By the speech in 1937, Himmler alluded to his connection to the old SA Chief of Staff as a lesson that both he and Heydrich had learned. In his speech he claimed: “In the years 1933 - 34 we approached these matters like ignorant fools because that was and is a world which to a normal man is so strange that he can hardly imagine it. Gruppenführer Heydrich and I and some other people had to really learn in the field and only thanks to bad experiences.”⁴⁴ His remarks about their “lessons learned” reveal that he was, at that time, not just reflecting his own normality against the effeminate homosexual model, but the masculine model as well. Furthermore, he indirectly showed that despite reading Blüher’s work in 1922, he had still maintained the interpretation of a homosexual as being effeminate. Moreover, it showed that he denied the existence of a masculine model to homosexuality until Röhm’s case proved him wrong and threatened his identity again. The result of his lessons in 1933/34 were that he would have to maneuver his own interpretation of masculinity between the two models of homosexuality, and that he would need to clarify how the younger SS members needed to resist what Heydrich and Himmler believed to be perverse temptations.

⁴⁴ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraph 18.

CHAPTER 5. REFLECTIONS OF THE BAD TÖLZ

The Bad Tölz speech brought together the culmination of the Reichsführer's long lived obsession with homosexuality by reinforcing it with his own masculine experience. However, his own understanding of homosexuality had been changing since his identity crisis 1919. By the time of the speech his understanding of sexuality was that if a young man leaned too far towards a masculine or feminine demeanor, they could slip onto the "path towards homosexuality". However, this perspective had only fully solidified itself between the Nazi consolidation of power in 1932/33, and more specifically through the Röhm Purge in the summer of 1934. Before that time, he still operated under the impression that homosexuals were weak, cowardly, and effeminate men whom Magnus Hirschfeld represented. The effeminate homosexual stereotype had been fostered by years of Hirschfeld's work for the community's rights and by the moral panic propaganda that was aided by leading eugenicists and psychiatrists, all of which influenced Himmler until his identity crisis beginning in 1919.

Although Himmler began persecuting the homosexual community in 1933, he did not reveal his own previous struggles with sexuality and masculinity until the Bad Tölz speech.⁴⁵ In fact, he reflected upon his own solutions to his previous struggles as tools to guide the current German youth towards a strong everlasting future.⁴⁶ He emphasized that with self-discipline, inner strength, and loyalty a young man could avoid what he considered as unhealthy sexual practices, both homosexual acts and onanism. He revealed these attributes with the key last statements of his speech that "a communal masturbating with mates, a communal friendship of a

⁴⁵ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraph 1.

⁴⁶ Krafft-Ebing; Kraepelin: By the time of the speech in 1937 Himmler was operating under old debates and theories that homosexuality could be acquired through neurasthenia, onanism and was a sign of degeneracy.

sexual nature with men or boys, is out of the question because he is generally shy before the girl.”⁴⁷ Here, he assumed that all adolescent men had a similar experience with fighting the different types of sexual temptations. Furthermore, he assumed that these temptations included sexual relations or mutual masturbation with their peers. His notable phrase on both homosexual acts and onanism does not directly say that he had these temptations; however, his solution at Bad Tölz to avoid these acts was the same solution that he used to get through his own identity crisis.⁴⁸ Coinciding with this comment, a large part of his own past struggles was that he was also shy around girls, and found it difficult to start and maintain conversations with them.⁴⁹ Therefore, his later emphasis on loyalty reflected upon his identity crisis and how he used his interpretation of loyalty to solidify that he was a “normal” man that followed heteronormative gender roles. It was not a coincidence that his use of the concept of loyalty would eventually become his own motto, *meine ehre heißt treue* (my honor is loyalty), since it had become so crucial to solidifying his own identity.

To Himmler, a “normal” man would maintain traditional, conservative masculine duties within society, while also safeguarding both feminine roles and charms. The *Männerstadt* (men-state) that he referred to incorporated his assertion that too many of his colleagues neglected the importance of women in society, and thus considered both women and girls in an inferior position to their own.⁵⁰ However, as he had pointed out, since the *Männerstadt* denied women a respectable place within the National Socialist society, it then promoted the bonds between men

⁴⁷ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraph 51.

⁴⁸ HHD, 19 October; 7, 13, 14 November; 26 December 1919; During the peak of his identity crisis between October 1919 through February 1920 Himmler referenced his need for self-control and inner strength in his diary no less than on five occasions.

⁴⁹ Longerich, 39.

⁵⁰ Himmler’s use of the word *Männerstadt* referred to a society that he believed was heavily focused upon the roles of men and neglected the roles of women.

and comrades to become too intense and threatened what he saw as the appropriate heteronormative balance between genders.⁵¹ For an example of how this imbalance could come about he claimed: “when a boy who is in love with a girl is mocked more than the normal amount, is designated as not fully respectable and as a sissy, and if one says to him: a guy does not bother with girls, he won’t bother with them. There are then only friendships with other youths. Men dominate in the world: so the next step [level] is homosexuality.”⁵² Now, considering his reflective nature of the speech, and his old concern of being considered unmanly, or a sissy by comparison, his claim here likely referred to someone's comment to him while he was discussing women and girls in his youth.⁵³ Yet, despite his claim he went on to say that the problem was further compounded by growing rights for women that feminists had been promoting in recent decades. In theory, he argued that if women were to become overly educated then the masculine and feminine roles in society would become blurred, thus also allowing homosexuality to grow through the neutralization of the genders.⁵⁴

The result of these two conflicting problems within German society therefore demanded, by Himmler, a traditional family consisting of men and women performing their gender duties. He believed that if each gender maintained their traditional roles within society then heterosexual relationships would form, which would then lead to marriage and healthy German children. His personal concern about gender roles also reinforced his underlying problem that he felt that he needed to address these concerns to society.

⁵¹ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraph 8.

⁵² *Ibid*, 39.

⁵³ HHD, November 1919- June 1924. Note that Himmler’s diary entries between November 1919 and February 1920 spoke of his interest in women on multiple occasions, and his frustration that he was unable to obtain his ideal relationship.

⁵⁴ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraph 30.

One of the major challenges that Himmler faced with his speech was that he needed to account for both effeminate and masculine homosexuals. His necessity to account for both major branches derived from his mistaken understanding that homosexuals were just effeminate in nature, as Magnus Hirschfeld had represented to the traditional conservative beliefs throughout Himmler's adolescent years. Since he had placed so much emphasis upon proving his masculinity through traditional gender roles for men, he perhaps later realized that he himself had overemphasized his own need to prove his masculinity. Therefore, after the Night of the Long Knives and the purge of several prominent masculine modeled homosexuals in the summer of 1934, he had to reposition himself so that he did not appear to be overly masculine either.⁵⁵ In his 1937 speech he had to emphasize the challenges of the growing *Männerstadt*, while not leaning back too far towards the effeminate homosexual stereotype. In order to counter the *Männerstadt's* association with masculine homosexuals he argued that Germany had been a *Männerstadt* for centuries, and that the country needed to maintain this status to avoid a matriarchy.⁵⁶ Furthermore, to account for what had been happening in the overly masculine state with its link to homosexuals, he blamed the youth as being misguided or misled, as he had once felt. Then, as a result of blaming the youth he grounded his concerns of the *Männerstadt* into his own interpretation of heteronormative behavior.

Masculinity and a man's duty in 1937 Germany, as Himmler envisioned them, were not solely represented by the reproduction of large, healthy German families. Instead the healthy family was the outcome of the individuals who could navigate between the valuable masculine

⁵⁵ The Night of the Long Knives, which is also known as the Röhm purge, began on the night of June 30th, 1934 and persisted through July 2nd, 1934. Over the course of the summer days and nights the Nazi party along with the SS purged the SA of their known homosexual leaders or inner party leaders such as Ernst Röhm.

⁵⁶ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraphs 8,7.

bonds between men, while also respecting women. Himmler's speech therefore reflected heavily upon his own identity crisis between the fall of 1919 through the summer of 1922, as he fought to prove his own masculinity and to disprove any personal thoughts of sexual temptations that he considered "abnormal".⁵⁷ Moreover, since he was able to maintain his ideals and quell any doubts of his own identity, he could then promote this same solution for other youths.

In the 1937 speech, Himmler evoked his youthful experience with the *Freikorps* and dueling fraternity by identifying the SS as a soldierly order that was expected to teach young cadets to become chivalrous and proper gentlemen.⁵⁸ Furthermore, as he explained the problems of heavy masculinization of all parts of German society, he reinforced his own interpretation on what should and should not be practiced in general society. He felt it necessary to explain that the type of drills and orders expected of the military and SS should not be duplicated in the rest of society. For an example he referenced a conversation that he had with the head of the German Labor Front, Robert Ley.

I asked him [Robert Ley], for example, after the really beautiful rally of political leaders at Nuremberg: "Why do you give a command? I would not do it." There were 100,000 political leaders on the field. They would have to be very well drilled soldiers, if the commands: Attention! Raise the flags! Lower the flags! should be well carried out by 100,000 men. "Why do not you speak in speech like this: and now we raise the flags, and lower the flags!" It is exactly the same thing, but it is not an overly virile, soldiery, military form. Why do orders have to be given in such matters? These are just a few thoughts on this issue. I come back to this point again. I said we are masculinizing all of life too much.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Note: Despite the missing segments to his diary, what has been recovered has shown how Himmler was obsessing over his masculinity, by not being able to prove it to himself.

⁵⁸ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraphs 34, 41.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 36-38.

Himmler's point in referencing Robert Ley reinforced his concern of the over masculinization of German society, and the potential danger that could come from it. However, it also revealed his views that the discipline required for soldierly and dueling experiences were still considered very masculine; and more importantly that the discipline required for these experiences should not be jeopardized by the masculinization of German society.

During the 1937 speech Himmler directly reflected on the *Jugendkultur* debates 25 years before by emphasizing the need to guide youth in the right direction. His concern not only revolved around the excessive masculinization of the entire lives of all Germans, but it also specifically targeted adolescent boys.⁶⁰ For example, he claimed that "the age of 15 - 16 years - that is a fact from experience - is the age at which the boy is on the tipping point. If he has a dancing lesson heartthrob or a childhood crush on some girl, he is won over, he has been drawn away from the dangerous plane [homosexuality]."⁶¹ Here his point reinforced the old moral panic's emphasis during the *Jugendkultur* debates, insofar as the moralists felt that without proper guidance adolescent boys would turn towards onanism or homosexual practices. Furthermore, he argued this position more clearly in a key phrase of his speech, when he claimed that "the moment in which he is totally nuts about a girl - I must say it again clearly - a communal masturbating with mates, a communal friendship of a sexual nature with men or boys, is out of the question because he is generally shy before the girl."⁶² Considering that these last two comments came as closing remarks for his Bad Tölz speech, and therefore key points of emphasis for the speech, they reveal that he operated under the same principles and science as

⁶⁰ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraph 30.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 51.

⁶² *Ibid*, 51.

the moralists had done. Moreover, these comments about sexual temptations for adolescent males also show that he had been receptive of the moralist concerns during his own upbringing in the 1910s and that he assumed other young men had the same temptations.

Himmler also reflected upon the *Jugendkultur* debates when he directly refuted arguments about love between men that Hans Blüher had made during and after the debates. In fact, Himmler mentioned Blüher by name in the Bad Tölz speech when he claimed that: “these are the thoughts of Herr Blüher, which then prove that: “In general, the greatest form of love is not between man and woman; with that there are children; that is something animalistic. The greatest form is the sublimated love between man and man. It is only from this that the greatest things in world history have come about.”⁶³ His use of the famous homosexual advocate underlined the notion that he felt that his generals knew who Blüher was or how he was corrupting the youth. Himmler himself read Blüher’s book *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft* (The Role of the Erotic in the Male Society) in March of 1922, and he was countering Blüher’s theories to fundamentally reinforce his own arguments at Bad Tölz.⁶⁴ Since Blüher had been a heavy supporter of the *Wandervogel* organization, he would have also been a primary target by the moral panic propaganda in the 1910s.⁶⁵ Therefore, while Germany debated the position of the youth program, Himmler was exposed to Blüher alongside Hirschfeld’s effeminate stereotype. Apparently, the debates had been influential enough on Himmler that he decided to investigate the known homosexual writer even further in 1922.

⁶³ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraph 40. Brackets inserted by translator of homosexual speech.

⁶⁴ HHD, 4 March 1922.

⁶⁵ In 1912 Blüher had published *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen* (The German Wondering Bird Movement as an Erotic Phenomenon) with a Forward from Magnus Hirschfeld.

Moreover, the Reichsführer's specific attention to the writer during the speech also reinforced the notion that he was not only drawing information from what he read, but also from the debates during his adolescent years.

Himmler's completion of Blüher's book in March 1922 is also significant in that he had long since established that his dancing skills allowed him to meet and get to know women without any type of sexual relations. It had been two years since he began entering comments of his successful dancing events in his diary, during which he realized that his experiences in dancing had helped him overcome a dangerous path towards homosexuality. Any doubt that he had about his sexuality was quelled since he was able to talk to women and maintain his masculinity in doing so. Therefore, Himmler reflected upon his found solution during the speech by asserting that coming together with young women and dancing was the solution for all young Germans to follow to avoid non-traditional sexual behaviors.

By the time of his 1937 speech Himmler openly asserted the high levels of homosexuals in the Catholic church and estimated that "in the monasteries the homosexuality ranges from 90 or 95 to 100 %."⁶⁶ Himmler's connection between the church and homosexuals did not stop there, he went on to claim that: "The attitude about the inferiority of women is a typical Christian attitude, and we also who have been national socialists up to this day - many even who are strict heathens - have unwittingly adopted this set of ideas. I know even today very many party members who believe they have to prove the special firmness of their world - view (*Weltanschauung*) and their own special masculinity through very rowdy and truculent behavior toward women."⁶⁷ His claim linking Christianity to homosexuality here revealed that his

⁶⁶ Heinrich Himmler, *Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*, paragraph 45.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 47.

understanding of masculinity within the church mirrored that of members of the national socialist party. Furthermore, during the speech he reinforced his position that poor treatment of women and the emphasis of men had already shown the destructive capabilities in the church. “Within the next four years very conclusive evidence will be produced - I hope - that the Church organization in its leadership, its priesthood, is for the most part a homosexual erotic men - union (*Männerbund*) that on this basis has been terrorizing humanity for the past 1800 years, demands from it the greatest blood sacrifice, and has been sadistically perverse in its utterances in the past. I need only to recall the witch and heretic trials.”⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Ibid, 46.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Heinrich Himmler's speech about homosexuality revealed four major points of how he had understood sexuality throughout his life. His first impressions of homosexuality derived from the debates and conversations about what conservatives viewed as abnormal behavior during his childhood. These debates revolved around the emerging homosexual rights movement that persisted through his entire life. The traditional conservative class promoted fear and moral panic propaganda as Hirschfeld advocated for the removal of §175 of German Law, and as the effects of the Eulenburg Affair continued to jeopardize the conservative's masculine integrity. The conservative masculine identity was then further questioned as Blüher supported the *Wandervogel* youth culture, which they felt could mislead the German youth towards the destructive homosexual path. Moreover, with the loss of the Great War and the establishment of the progressive Weimar Republic, the traditional German families, like the Himmlers, felt that their values were threatened. As the culprit they saw Hirschfeld's successes with the sexual right's movement as being the primary target for their opposition. Since Hirschfeld represented feminism and sexual freedom, he was viewed as being weak, soft, and cowardly. Furthermore, considering his theories promoted effeminate homosexuals, they became the prevailing stereotype for homosexuality. Therefore, as Himmler approached the beginning of his identity crisis in the fall of 1919, he felt that he needed to prove his masculinity against an effeminate model of homosexuality.

Since the adolescent Himmler equated effeminacy and homosexuality through 1922, he strove to prove his masculinity against that stereotype. Throughout his identity crisis between 1919-1922 he ultimately desired to prove himself by soldierly experience. However, the inability to maintain active duty forced him to turn to a variety of alternatives. He first tried

courting women, but his initial attempts failed due to his greater desire to be sexually abstinent, along with his general awkwardness with women. At that point, the temporary solution to his problem was to move to Russia and prove his manliness through struggle and hardship; however, that desire was more an act of desperation. Even though he attempted to learn the Russian language, his desire to move away only seemed to be a reaction to difficulties in his relationship with Maja. For a time, he thought the long-term solution to proving his masculinity would come through the sport of fencing, and so he joined the Apollo dueling fraternity to work towards that goal. Since he had to learn and develop skills in fencing, however, that alternative to prove himself would not help him through the near future. Also, as he noted in his diary throughout the fall of 1919, his interest in dueling came into direct conflict with his religious devotion. Thus, the more he considered the route to masculinity through dueling, the more he questioned his faith. Subsequently, any doubt that he had about religious faith would have been reinforced by his reading of the *Priest and the Acolyte*. Where he could relate to the priest as both of them struggled with their faith and sexuality. Himmler believed he needed to succeed and resist sexual temptation, whereas the priest did not. This led him to conclude that the priest was weak, cowardly, and soft and therefore a homosexual, whereas Himmler maintained self-control and was brave and strong, which showed his masculine dominance.

The unintended solution to Himmler's crisis turned out to be meeting women through dancing. While dancing he was able to meet and get to know women, yet have the option to leave them at the end of the evening. As a result, he could still maintain his self-control with finding his right match, while not breaking his own vows of abstinence in the process. Additionally, since Himmler was able to dance with women, it helped him establish that he still followed the traditional masculine gender role despite the political changes in Germany. This

solution of dancing allowed him to work his way through the letdown of Maja's rejection while his inner struggles between dueling and religion played out. Therefore, by the time he read Bloxam's book and became even more disillusioned with the church, he had long since established the solution to reinforce his masculinity through dancing. However, over the course of the next two years, while he danced and fenced, he also solidified his interpretation of his own masculine identity as one characterized primarily by self-control, discipline, and loyalty. He proved to himself that he was not weak, cowardly, or soft like the stereotypical effeminate homosexual that he contrasted his masculinity against, which set him up for a future shock when the case of Röhm showed him that homosexuals could also be masculine in nature, and thus display the same ideals of self-control, self-discipline crucial to his own heteronormative vision.

In early 1922 Himmler read Hans Blüher's *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft*, which made an impression upon him that reappeared during his speech 15 years later. Yet, at least at that moment in 1922 the theory of love between two men did not appear to have been of such a major threat to him, as he did not mention the theories in personal thought or conversation anymore in his diary. However, during the Bad Tölz speech he did refer to this same theory directly. By the time of the speech, Himmler had long since realized that masculine homosexual stereotype indeed existed, as Ernst Röhm had exemplified. Therefore, as one of the reasons for the speech, he used the opportunity to reinforce how he represented a "normal" masculine heterosexual man. By directly arguing against Blüher's theory of love between two men in his speech Himmler was able to reinforce his own masculinity in contrast to Blüher's "incorrect" theory. Furthermore, since he contrasted his own masculinity against Blüher's theory, he also reinforced his own sense of "normality," since it had been jeopardized by his mentorship with Röhm. Himmler's consistent point of the *Männerstadt* in contrast to his comments of

cowardly and soft men showed that he was maneuvering himself between the masculine and effeminate homosexual stereotypes. His unspoken point here was to assert that he was a masculine heterosexual man in contrast to Blüher, while he reinforced his own reflections on how a young man could be linked to a “cowardly” and “soft” effeminate homosexual. Therefore, by indirectly discussing both homosexual models, he showed that he needed to maneuver between both stereotypes to avoid association with either of them.

Lastly, Himmler used the Bad Tölz speech to establish how young men in Nazi Germany could avoid being led towards homosexuality. He believed that if young men were properly guided towards healthy opportunities to meet and dance with young women, then they would not deviate from the heteronormative ideal of “balanced” masculinity he proposed. The purpose of Himmler’s speech was not only to address the “homosexual problem” in Germany, but also to offer a solution to reduce the number of homosexuals, and to increase the number of healthy German families. His solution to help young German men derived from his own experience: he believed that since he had proven himself to be “a real man,” the same methods could and should be applied more generally to youth throughout the nation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Baur, Erwin, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz. *Grundriss Der Menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre Und Rassenhygiene*. München: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, (1921), 239.

Bloxam, John Francis. and Stuart Mason. *The Priest and the Acolyte: with an Introductory Protest by Stuart Mason*. London: The Lotus Press, 1907.
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010824032>.

Röhm, Ernst, and Helmut Klotz. *Der Fall Röhm*. Berlin-Tempelhof: Dr. Helmut Klotz, 1932.

Heinrich Himmler. *The Diaries of Heinrich Himmler 1914-1924*. Diary. Stanford University: Hoover Institute Archives, (Box 15, Folder 2) *Register of Heinrich Himmler Papers*.

Himmler, Heinrich, and G F H. "Heinrich Himmler- Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders." *Heinrich Himmler- Speech About Homosexuality to the SS Group Leaders*. February 18, 1937.
[https://archive.org/stream/HeinrichHimmlerSpeechAboutHomosexualityToTheSSGroupLeaders/Heinrich Himmler - Speech About Homosexuality to The SS Group Leaders_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/HeinrichHimmlerSpeechAboutHomosexualityToTheSSGroupLeaders/Heinrich%20Himmler%20-%20Speech%20About%20Homosexuality%20to%20The%20SS%20Group%20Leaders_djvu.txt).

Hirschfeld, M., and J. Conway. *Berlins Third Sex*. Berlin: Rixdorf, 2017.

Hirschfeld, Magnus. *Sexualpathologie; Ein Lehrbuch für Aerzte Und Studierende*. Bonn: Marcus & Weber, 1921. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100110528>.

Hoche, Alfred. *Zur Frage Der Forensischen Beurtheilung Sexueller Vergehen*. Leipzig, 1896.
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100425363>.

Krafft-Ebing, Richard. *Psychopathia Sexualis*. 12th ed. New York, New York: Rebman Company, 2010.

Nordau, Max Simon. *Degeneration*. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.

Röhm Ernst, and Eleanor Hancock. *The Memoirs of Ernst Röhm*. Translated by Geoffrey Brooks. Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2012.

Schallmayer, Wilhelm. *Vererbung Und Auslese: Grundriss Der Gesellschaftsbiologie Und Der Lehre Vom Rassedienst, Für Rassehygieniker, Bevölkerungspolitiker, Ärzte, Anthropologen, Soziologen, Erzieher, Kriminalisten, höhere Verwaltungsbeamte Und Politisch Interessierte Gebildete Aller Stände*. Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1920. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001348224>.

Secondary Sources

Anderson, Susan C. "Otto Weininger's Masculine Utopia." *German Studies Review* 19, no. 3 (1996): 433-53. doi:10.2307/1432526.

Angress, Werner T., and Bradley F. Smith. "Diaries of Heinrich Himmler's Early Years." *The Journal of Modern History* 31, no. 3 (1959): 206-24. www.jstor.org/stable/1875583.

Beachy, Robert. "The German Invention of Homosexuality." *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 4 (December 2010): 801–38. <https://doi.org/10.1086/656077>.

Dickinson, Edward Ross. "The Men's Christian Morality Movement in Germany, 1880–1914: Some Reflections on Politics, Sex, and Sexual Politics." *The Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 1 (March 2003): 59–110. <https://doi.org/10.1086/377749>.

Domeier, Norman. "The Homosexual Scare and the Masculinization of German Politics before World War I." *Central European History* 47, no. 4 (December 2014): 737–59. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0008938914001903>.

Gerwarth, Robert. *Hitlers Hangman: the Life of Heydrich*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2012.

Hancock, Eleanor. "'Only the Real, the True, the Masculine Held Its Value': Ernst Röhm, Masculinity, and Male Homosexuality." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 4 (1998): 616-41. www.jstor.org/stable/3840412.

Ivory, Yvonne. "The Urning and His Own: Individualism and the Fin-De-Siecle Invert." *German Studies Review* 26, no. 2 (May 2003): 333–52. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1433329>.

Kühne Thomas. *The Rise and Fall of Comradeship: Hitlers Soldiers, Male Bonding and Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Loewenberg, Peter. "The Unsuccessful Adolescence of Heinrich Himmler." *The American Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (1971): 612-41. doi:10.2307/1851620.

Longerich, Peter. *Heinrich Himmler*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Mosse, George L. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. New York: Howard Fertig, 1997.

Pursell, Tim. "Queer Eyes and Wagnerian Guys: Homoeroticism in the Art of the Third Reich." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 1 (January 2008): 110–37. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sex.2008.0007>.

Ramsey, Glenn. "The Rites of Artgenossen: Contesting Homosexual Political Culture in Weimar Germany." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 1 (January 2008): 85–109. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sex.2008.0009>.

Smith, Bradley F. *Heinrich Himmler: a Nazi in the Making: 1900-1926*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Inst. Press, 1974.

Wackerfuss, Andrew. *Stormtrooper Families: Homosexuality and Community in the Early Nazi Movement*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 2015.

Williams, John Alexander. "Ecstasies of the Young: Sexuality, the Youth Movement, and Moral Panic in Germany on the Eve of the First World War." *Central European History* 34, no. 2 (2001): 163–89. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691610152977938>.