CHAPTER 1

Black Occupation Children and the Devolution of the Nazi Racial State

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Prior to 1945, children were a primary target in the Nazi regime's murderous quest to build a new order based upon fantastical notions of racial purity. In a determined drive to craft an Aryan superstate and realize a racialized empire in Europe, the Nazi regime enacted social policies ranging from sterilization to "euthanasia" and, ultimately, mechanized mass murder targeted at those deemed eugenically or racially undesirable. Children were not incidental victims of this fight for posterity. In demographic terms, they numbered among the Third Reich's earliest and most consistent casualties. Beginning in the 1930s, hundreds of Afro-German adolescents were sterilized, and thousands of disabled institutionalized children, regardless of ethnicity, were quietly starved to death or killed by lethal injection. Abortion and adoption law in Germany was recast along racial lines, resulting in the forcible termination of fetuses and families judged inimical to "the public interest" due to the presence of "alien blood." By the war years, Polish and Soviet youth were pressed into slave labor, while phenotypically pleasing Polish, Czech, and Yugoslavian children were kidnapped and Aryanized into German families. Once transports to the Nazi death camps began, children were seized from kindergartens without their parents' knowledge and shipped away on their own. Painfully few of the mostly Jewish children survived the initial hours following arrival at the camps. Due to their dependent and unproductive status, on the one hand, and fears about their future reproductive potential, on the other, children—some unescorted, others accompanied by mothers, siblings, or grandmothers—were inevitably "selected" for immediate death.[1]

After 1945 and the demise of the Third Reich, children remained a focus of racialized social policy in Germany, particularly in the decade and a

half following the war. Although no longer subject to physical violence or death by state dictate, certain children continued to serve as objects of scientific study by anthropologists, psychologists, social workers, and school and state officials intent on documenting signs of racial difference. Children, that is, remained a central social category for the postwar production of national-racial ideology. The historical literature on state-sponsored racism and mass murder under the Third Reich is vast, and although scholars have recently published excellent work on the Nazi regulation of sex and reproduction, there has been little focus on children as a category of social analysis.[2] This essay aims to address this gap and argues that the study of social policy toward children has a lot to tell us not only about Nazi conceptions of race and nation but, more significant for the purposes of this volume, about the evolution of racial ideology during the transition from National Socialism to liberal democracy in postwar West Germany.

Here I explore some key features of how attention to children—in particular, black occupation children fathered by Allied troops of color and born to white German mothers—figured in what I have called the *devolution* of the Nazi racial state.[3] Informing this analysis is an insistence that we begin to consider two key postwar developments—namely, democratization and racial reconstruction—in tandem as mutually informing processes. The transition away from Nazi racial practice and understanding was hardly abrupt. Rather, this was a protracted social process lasting at least into the 1960s. It was through the articulation of social policy regarding abortion, adoption, schooling, and integration of these youth into the workforce that questions of German racial redefinition after 1945 were worked out.

Postwar responses to black occupation children represent a formative moment in the racial reconstruction of postfascist Germany. Military occupation between 1945 and 1949 produced some 94,000 occupation children. However, official and public attention fixed on a small subset, the so-called "*farbige Mischlinge*" or "colored mixed-bloods," distinguished from the others by their black paternity. Although they constituted a small minority of postwar German births—numbering only about 3,000 in 1950 and nearly double that by 1955—West German federal and state officials, youth welfare workers, and the press invested the children with considerable symbolic significance.

The years after 1945 were constituent for contemporary German racial understanding, and postwar debates regarding "miscegenation" and "*Mischlingskinder*" were central to the ideological transition from Na-

tional Socialist to democratic approaches to race. The term "*Mischling,*" in fact, survived the Third Reich and persisted well into the 1960s in official, scholarly, media, and public usage in West Germany. But its content had changed. Rather than refer to the progeny of so-called mixed unions between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans as it had during the Third Reich, immediately after the war it came to connote the offspring of white German women and foreign men of color.[4] Thus "*Mischling*" remained a racialized category of social analysis and social policy after 1945, as before. But the definition of *which races* had mixed, as well as the social significance of such mixing, had fundamentally altered.

Contact Zones: The Social Meaning of Military Occupation

I begin with a few brief observations about the radically altered conditions that confronted Germans in 1945 since these helped shape the terms of social and ideological revaluation following National Socialism's demise. First, it is important to note that the postwar reformulation of notions of race in Germany was not a purely national enterprise but an international and transnational one as well. Defeat in the spring of 1945 brought military occupation and the victorious Allies' mandate for Germans to denazify and democratize themselves, their society, and their polity. The first decades after the war were dominated by debates regarding self-definition as contemporaries were forced to grapple with the question of what it would it mean to be German after Hitler and the Holocaust.

Second, debates about national self-definition necessarily involved confronting issues of race since Germany was occupied by the multiethnic armies of enemy nations. Former racial subordinates—whether Jews, Slavs, North Africans, or African Americans—now occupied a position of political superiority due to their membership in the Allied forces. The occupation challenged Germans to function within a context that was radically *postfascist* in terms of social composition and political authority, if not yet in terms of ideological disposition or social policy.

Third, the most explicit discussions of "race" after the war occurred in response to interracial sex and reproduction between German women and Allied soldiers of color. This was accompanied by an emerging unwillingness among German officials to speak openly about Jews in racialized terms—although antisemitic utterances and actions certainly persisted in informal private interactions, through the circulation of jokes and

stereotypes, and even in anonymous exchanges on public transportation or desecrations of Jewish cemeteries.[5]

American practices of racial segregation and antiblack racism in the American occupation forces also helped shape racial ideology after 1945. This does not mean that postwar Germans learned antiblack racism from American occupiers. After all, Germans had a long tradition of such bigotry that predated and was intensified by Germany's short stint as colonial power prior to 1918 and shorter stint as National Socialist power between 1933 and 1945. Rather, informal contacts between occupier and occupied— along with the discriminatory policies of the U.S. military toward its minorities and the tense relations among occupation soldiers of differing ethnicities—affected the ways Germans perceived and received American political and social values after 1945. Although the American Military Government in Germany put a good deal of emphasis on official efforts to denazify and reeducate the German public, "race" barely figured in formal reeducation programs (beyond the legal language against discrimination that ultimately entered West Germany's *Grundgesetz* in 1949). As a result, racial reconstruction in early postwar Germany resulted primarily not from official Allied pronouncements or programs, but more spontaneously through Germans' interaction with, and observation of, the social and racial dynamics of occupation on the ground in Germany.

The United States defeated and occupied Germany with a Jim Crow army in 1945, and the hierarchical values of racial segregation affected social dynamics and perceptions of the American occupation, both among American soldiers and between American occupiers and Germans. In particular, interracial fraternization between African American GIs and white German women elicited a zealous rage—and frequent incidents of verbal and physical abuse—by white GIs. In a series of intelligence debriefings of U.S. troops returning from overseas in 1945, for example, numerous white officers and soldiers denounced interracial dating by black GIs abroad as the primary cause of racial violence in the military. On the ground in Germany, it was treated as an unbearable provocation. White GIs harassed German women in the company of black GIs and physically assaulted the men. American military police forcibly excluded black GIs from bars, in effect imposing racial segregation on German establishments, as Maria Höhn has shown. Where segregation broke down, violent brawls, serious injury, and even murder could result. White American hostility toward interracial sexual relations between African American troops and German women in Germany persisted for decades, but was especially vehement and

violent during the late 1940s and 1950s—the years during which desegregation of the U.S. military, if not American society at large, was accomplished. What is more, it was assiduously reported in the German press and no doubt served to condone acts of violence directed at black GIs by German men, which were less frequent but not unheard of.[6] During the occupation, white men of American and German nationality employed a common epithet, *Negerliebchen* or "nigger lover," newly popularized in the German language, to slander women who associated with black troops. Although white Americans and Germans drew on distinct national-historical idioms of race, both agreed upon the necessity to "defend" white manhood and police white women.[7]

In the public behavior of U.S. troops on the German street, troubled American race relations were on display for all to see. Germans absorbed the *postwar* lesson, inadvertently taught by their new American masters, that democratic forms and values were consistent with racialist, even racist, ideology and social organization. German understandings of the content of "democratization" were conditioned by the racialized context within which this was delivered. As a result, military occupation initially reinforced white supremacy as a shared value of mainstream American and German cultures.[8]

Abortion and the Persistence of Antinatalism

The Nazi regime had been pronatalist regarding Aryan reproduction and antinatalist regarding non-Aryan. During the Third Reich, new laws were promulgated that restricted the social and sexual choices of "Aryan" women —those deemed racially and eugenically valuable as reproducers of the *Volk*—to "Aryan" male partners. Relations between such women and "racially foreign" men, whether Jewish, Polish, Soviet, or Black, were strictly prohibited and severely sanctioned.[9] The same did not hold true for Aryan men, who retained the license to engage in interracial sex and wartime rape provided it was nonreproductive. Indeed, archival evidence suggests that at least one Black German girl, who was sterilized in 1937 as a "Rhineland bastard," narrowly escaped being shipped to Eastern Europe to be pressed into prostitution for the Wehrmacht.[10] During its twelve-year rule, National Socialism forged a culture based upon a "racialization of sex" in which the bodies of Aryan women were stringently policed, while the bodies of non-Aryan women were violently or murderously ex-

ploited.[11] In both cases, female sexuality was instrumentalized for national purposes by a regime intent on forging a powerful racial state and European empire.[12]

German defeat and the influx of occupation forces ended a decade of prescribed Aryan exclusivity in white German women's heterosexual relations. What came home to the Germans after 1945 was not just their former state enemies, but their declared *racial* enemies as well: Blacks, Jews, Slavs, and other so-called "Asiatics" who served in Allied armies or were liberated as slave laborers, POWs, or concentration and death camp inmates. The result for German women was that the restrictive, state-mandated Aryanized sex of the Third Reich gave way to a broader range of choice in social relations and sexual partners.[13]

In 1945, German state officials attempted to nullify the reproductive consequences of conquest by temporarily relaxing Paragraph 218, which outlawed abortion. Under National Socialism, a state-sponsored policy of "coercive pronatalism" emerged in which access to abortion was severely restricted for Aryan women, who were prohibited from terminating pregnancies under penalty of death, unless there were severe medical problems or unless pregnancy resulted from sexual relations with "racial aliens."[14] In liberalizing abortion policy, German officials specifically targeted "miscegenist" rape by enemy soldiers. In early March 1945, just months before defeat, the Reich Interior Ministry issued a decree to doctors, health offices, and hospitals to expedite abortions of "Slav and Mongol fetuses."[15] Sometime during the spring the Bavarian state government followed suit, issuing a secret memo authorizing abortions in rape cases involving "colored" troops. In the months following defeat, state and municipal officials continued to refer to those orders.[16] So while compulsory abortions and sterilizations ceased in May 1945 due to the nullification of Nazi laws, the elective abortion of fetuses continued apace from the first months of 1945 and over the course of the year "became a mass phenomenon."[17]

The majority of abortions between early 1945 and early 1946 occurred in response to rape by perceived racial aliens—Allied troops of color and Soviet soldiers—indicating that a commitment to racial eugenics and antinatalism persisted in abortion policy and practice after the Nazi state's demise.[18] This was possible because German authorities at the local and state level were left to deal with women's health and medical issues without firm instructions from the Allied occupation powers.[19] A German medical board of three doctors (preferably gynecologists) ruled on applications for abortion. Applications by women alleging rape by white Allied soldiers

were often denied, since medical boards "doubted that physical or emotional problems would ensue" for women carrying such pregnancies to term.[20]

While notions of *Rassenschande* (racial pollution) continued to inform the language and social policy of abortion in the early years of the occupation, the rationale for such decisions changed. The diagnostic focus was transferred from the racialized body of the offspring to the emotional state of its mother. For example, one thirty-six-year-old woman who alleged she had been raped by a Moroccan soldier and was applying for permission to abort wrote that it "affects me mentally to think that I shall bring a Moroccan child into this world." In assessing the case, the district magistrate noted that "one has to be careful because the incident occurred in a forest without witnesses" and expressed concern that she hadn't told her husband about the attack, though she might have contracted a sexually transmitted disease. Still, this magistrate concluded that "if she really *was* raped by a Moroccan, which can't be disproved, then emotional injuries must also exist," and he approved the abortion.[21] This reasoning signaled a shift in racialist thinking after 1945 and anticipated a crucial development in the rhetoric and rationale of postwar social policy: namely, the transition from an emphasis on the *biology of race* to the *psychology of racial difference.*[22]

By early 1946, as the incidence of rape and legal abortions declined, the first "occupation children" were born. German officials and social policy came to focus on the implications of consensual sex between occupying soldiers and native women in the Western zones. Evidence from southern Germany suggests that in addition to American GIs, German women also chose French occupation soldiers—including those from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and French Indochina—as lovers, bore their children, and in some cases married them and emigrated.[23] Despite this broader range of social interaction, American soldiers attracted the lion's share of Germans' attention and aggression.

In a survey conducted in the early 1950s, for example, German social workers asked German women why they had become involved with black troops. Similar questions were not posed to women involved with white foreign troops.[24] While almost half of the women surveyed expressed an intention to marry their black beaus, German and American officials could not accept that interracial relationships were based upon genuinely mutual love and desire. As a result, the women consorting with Black GIs were accused of wanton materialism and moral deficiency, and were characterized

as mentally impaired, asocial, or as prostitutes.[25] In many cases, women found in the company of African American GIs were remanded to VD treatment clinics, jails, or workhouses where they could be held against their will for anywhere from a few days to many months.[26]

After 1949, moral assumptions about the women who engaged in interracial fraternization continued to affect the ways that the perceived problem of biracial occupation children was formulated in the Federal Republic. Through the 1950s, German commentators of various political viewpoints insisted that the child should not be made to suffer for the "sins" of the mother. The high number of births in Bavaria alarmed state officials there, and they sought in vain to negotiate with the American military government regarding the citizenship status of the children. Ultimately, all occupation children, including those of color, were grudgingly extended German citizenship—but only after Allied Military Government officials made it clear that they would not entertain paternity suits or grant citizenship to their troops' out-of-wedlock offspring born abroad.[27] Since marriage between GIs and German women, while legally permissible by late 1946, was virtually impossible for black soldiers due to the racial biases inherent in the screening process, such interracial marriages remained rare, rendering most black occupation children "illegitimate." By closing off the possibility of emigration, this policy ensured that the children and their mothers would remain German citizens on German soil.[28]

Counting "Coloreds," Documenting Difference: Toward a Postwar Taxonomy of Race

As a resident minority population of citizen-minors, black occupation children attracted increased official and academic attention with the end of military occupation and the founding of the West German Federal Republic in 1949. From the turn of the 1950s, social and scientific debates about the meaning of race—and its implications for postwar West German society—focused insistently upon these children. Such debates not only invoked but also reconstituted German understandings of race by revising racial classifications, often with reference to contemporary American race relations and social science.

Here I can only summarize the ways that attention to the children revamped and redeployed racial categories in the postwar period.[29] Over the course of the early 1950s, Afro-German children were subjected to special

race-based censuses and anthropological studies beholden to methodologies of interwar *Rassenkunde.* Prior to 1945 and reaching back to the nineteenth century, Jews and Slavs, as well as Blacks, had been treated as alien to *Deutschtum* and, more tellingly, to the *Volkskörper,* or very "body of the nation."[30] After 1945, a number of factors, including Nazi-sponsored genocide and the subsequent emigration of surviving Jews, the westward expulsions of ethnic Germans from the eastern reaches of the former Reich, and an increasingly impermeable Iron Curtain dividing West Germans from Slavs (as much as capitalists from communists), imposed a type of ethnic unmixing on Cold War Central Europe. As a result, although "the East" continued as a political and ideological foe, by the 1950s, its perceived threat to West Germans' racial integrity was drastically diminished. Following geopolitical developments, the point of reference for West Germans shifted west to the United States.

By 1950, in fact, West German federal and state Interior Ministry officials explicitly constructed the postwar problem of race around skin color and, even more narrowly, blackness. That year, they surveyed state and municipal youth offices to determine the number and living arrangements of so-called "*Negermischlingskinder.*" By limiting the survey to West German states formerly occupied by the French and Americans (Baden, Bavaria, Hesse, Rheinland-Pfalz, Württemberg-Baden, and Württemberg-Hohenzollern) and drawing on a simplified appraisal of the racial and ethnic composition of those occupying armies, this survey established a postwar preoccupation with color/blackness in bureaucratic record-keeping and in official and public discourse regarding the reproductive consequences of defeat and occupation. What is more, this schematic racial binary—with its categories for national paternities on the one hand and colored paternity, or "*farbige Abstammung,*" on the other—set a precedent for a subsequent federal census of all occupation children in the Federal Republic undertaken in 1954.[31] In creating one explicitly racialized yet denationalized category keyed to "color," the official census in effect de-raced the offspring of Soviet paternity and rendered Jewishness invisible, implicitly coding the occupation children of these formerly racialized groups "white." As a result, the attribution of racialized identities previously, obsessively, and lethally targeted by the German state before 1945—whether Jewish, Slavic, or "Mongoloid/Asiatic"—disappeared from official record-keeping on postwar reproduction. What remained were distinctions of nationality, on one hand, and blackness, on the other.

Postwar Germans' telescoped focus on blackness was also evident in a

number of anthropological studies of "*Mischlingskinder*" in the 1950s. During the first half of the decade, two young German anthropologists, Walter Kirchner and Rudolf Sieg, independently undertook studies on Black German children ranging in age from one to six. Assisted, respectively, by Berlin's youth and health offices and by Christian social welfare organizations in West Germany proper, Kirchner and Sieg minutely recorded the children's skin color, lip thickness, and hair texture; the breadth of their noses, shoulders, chests, and pelvises; the length of their limbs and torsos; the shape of their dental bites; and the circumference of their heads and chests. In keeping with the earlier practice of German ethnographers and racial scientists, Kirchner appended a set of photographs of the children to his work. Both anthropologists analyzed the children's medical and psychological records, as well as their social, family, and moral milieu, and subjected the children to a series of intellectual and psychological exams. The point of these exercises was to establish the extent to which "*Mischlingskinder*" deviated from the white norm (Kirchner) and to account for the children's "anomalies" (Sieg).[32]

In exploring the somatic, psychological, and behavioral effects of "racial mixing," both anthropologists drew on the earlier work and methodologies of German racial scientists and eugenicists Eugen Fischer, Wolfgang Abel, and Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer (along with Americans Charles Davenport and Melville Herskovits). Beginning in the 1910s, Fischer pioneered an early study on racial mixing based upon the so-called Rehobother bastards—the children of German fathers and Nama (or "Hottentot") mothers—and concluded that "racial crossing" led to "degeneration" or, at best, the inheritance of "disharmonious traits." Fischer continued his work into the Nazi years. Joined by Abel and others, he conducted racial examinations of the so-called "Rhineland bastards" (the biracial German children of French African occupation troops and German women born after World War I) and later of Jews, providing scientific expertise for the Third Reich's increasingly radical program of eugenic engineering that culminated in forced sterilization and murder.[33]

Though beholden to the earlier work of Fischer and others, the anthropological studies of the 1950s departed from that literature in small and self-conscious ways. As products of young anthropologists who had not established their credentials during the Third Reich but had been trained by those who had, their studies serve as transitional texts. While relying on the methodology of their precursors, they reworked aspects of the Nazi-era paradigm in search of a morally acceptable postwar alternative.

In its attention to the effects of race mixing, Kirchner's postwar work clearly continued his predecessors' tendency to think within a racist eugenicist paradigm. But what is peculiarly postwar is his choice of subject: the black Mischlingskind. This was not a logical choice in demographic terms. The vast majority of black occupation children resided in the southern states of mainland West Germany. Kirchner's study was based in Berlin, where less than 2 percent of the children (about eighty in total) were located.[34] A focus on Jewish children or so-called *Russenkinder,* the colloquial term for German children of Soviet paternity in the first years after the war, would have yielded a larger sample.[35] But there is no indication that Kirchner ever considered such a study, and that is precisely my point. It was politically impossible to contemplate studying Jewish or *Russenkinder* after the death camps, Nazi defeat, and the onset of the Cold War.[36] The postwar political situation influenced the postfascist study of race and the delineation of racial categories in Germany.

Kirchner's and Sieg's studies were also symptomatic in their exclusive emphasis on a subset of black occupation children: namely, those of African American paternity. Kirchner, for example, examined the medical records, social welfare and school reports of fifty "colored mixed-blood children" in Berlin ranging in age from one to twenty but focused his analysis on a subgroup of twenty-three children, aged one through five, of "American Negro" paternity. Similarly, Sieg had access to children of Algerian, Moroccan, and American paternity but deliberately excluded all but the latter from his study. This deliberate focus on black American paternity and the post-1945 circumstances of conception allowed these anthropologists to render a relatively rosy picture of the postwar *Mischlingskind*'s physical, mental, and emotional health as compared to the supposedly more negative impact of Moroccan paternity on "Rhineland bastards" after the First World War. In accounting for the absence of serious disease among postwar *Mischlingskinder,* both Kirchner and Sieg credited the relative health and wealth of black American GIs. Unlike North African soldiers after 1918, who "presumably represented a thoroughly unfavorable selection" in eugenic and material terms, African Americans were assumed to have few serious maladies, in part because "Negros" were defined as mixed-race rather than pure-blooded Blacks and had ample resources with which to provide for their offspring.[37]

This assessment made all of the difference for the children. Neither anthropologist found significant deviations in the health, intelligence, or emotional disposition of postwar *Mischlingskinder* when compared to

their white counterparts. However, they did note certain developmental, physical, and behavioral characteristics, which they attributed to the children's "Negroid biological inheritance," and that clearly echoed the stereotypes handed down by previous generations of racial scientists. For example, Kirchner and Sieg cited a disposition for respiratory disease (due to maladjustment to the European climate); abnormalities of dental bite; long legs; lively temperaments; a marked joy in movement, including dance; and well-developed speaking abilities, with particular talents for rhythmic speech, rhyme, and imitation. Although the children were described as open to social contact, they were also declared willful, impatient, uncooperative, and at times given to strong, although not necessarily ungovernable, impulses.[38]

As regards the children's mothers, Kirchner judged their influence as generally beneficial, which, he argued, was not the case when one considered the example of the earlier "Rhineland bastards" who were alleged to have suffered disproportionately from psychopathologies. Following earlier racial scientists, Kirchner blamed that interwar generation's poor mental health on the miserable genetic stock of their "asocial" mothers, who were deemed a "particularly negative" type of woman. "In the case of Berliner Mischlinge" born after 1945, he judged that "no such factor presented itself." As Sieg put it at the end of his study, "No detrimental consequences of bastardization were perceptible among *our* Mischlingskinder."[39]

Ultimately, then, postwar anthropologists arrived at a less negative assessment of "race-mixing" and "*Mischlingskinder*" by reading the contemporary episode in relation to earlier historical experience. Their upbeat prognostications rested on evaluating the distinct national and gender dimensions of each case: "Our *Mischlingskinder*" present fewer problems than those of the past because they were fathered by healthy, wealthy "American Negroes," rather than diseased and uncultivated Africans; because they were born to caring lower-class mothers, rather than asocial lunatics.

Finally, the postwar anthropological studies differed significantly from their precursors in their focus on social environment, and in particular its potentially mitigating effect on racial inheritance. While Kirchner and Sieg detected a tendency for hotheadedness, impulsiveness, and disobedience among Black German children, they also declared that these supposedly inherited racial qualities could be tempered by the proper positive influences of attentive mothers, childhood friendships, and a well-disposed public. The markers of "race," that is to say, were not destiny.[40] If

Kirchner and Sieg agreed with earlier anthropologists that racial difference persisted in the biology and psychology of their subjects, Kirchner's innovation was to permit the possibility of social solutions to the purported "problems of race."

In sum, official surveys and anthropological studies of "*Mischlingskinder*" of the 1950s articulated a revised taxonomy of race that would spur new social policy initiatives. In the process, West German official, academic, and media reports constructed a unitary origin for black occupation children. By consistently representing them as offspring of black American soldiers, such reports erased the actual national affiliation of the more diverse paternity by Allied soldiers. By the 1950s, "race" in West Germany was embodied in "*Mischlingskind*" and linked to America. German censuses and scientists had conceived a putatively "new" and peculiarly postwar problem of race.

Viewed in concert, the official censuses and anthropological studies of postwar Afro-German children recalibrated definitions of race by the early 1950s in West Germany. "Negro or Colored" rather than Jewish heredity was labeled, understood, and investigated in racial terms. This is not to argue that antisemitism disappeared from West German life or that Jews and other European minorities were not races in the eyes of many West Germans. There is ample evidence that they were.[41] Rather, it is to argue that West German social policy and academic scholarship of the 1950s did not authorize defining those differences as racial. In this sense, postwar West German definitions of race paralleled those of the postwar United States. For over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, American social scientists softened the differences among whites of European origin (including, in particular, Jews) to a cultural one and conceived of these groups in terms of "ethnicity." Race, as a concept, continued to be employed but was reduced to the radically simplified terms of the black-white binary (or at its most articulated, the black-white-yellow triad), redrawing the lines of meaningful difference according to stereotypical phenotype.[42] The result was a confluence of the broad forms of racial taxonomy in both West Germany and the United States.

Learning from America: Prejudice Studies and the Psychology of "Race"

The reformulation of notions of race after 1945 did not occur in a vacuum but was shaped by transnational influences and interactions between

Americans and Germans. One significant example for the postwar period was the creation of the *Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit* (Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation), which was modeled on the National Council of Christians and Jews. Founded in the interwar United States to fight antisemitism and the racist violence of the Ku Klux Klan, the *Gesellschaft* was exported to Europe after World War II in response to the murderous racism of the Third Reich. By mid-1948, the U.S. Military Government supported the *Gesellschaft*'s efforts to recruit Germans to establish branches in major German cities to fight against racial and anti-Jewish discrimination in postwar Germany and to foster tolerance and interconfessional understanding.[43]

There were a couple of noteworthy consequences of the *Gesellschaft*'s founding. First, it transferred to the Federal Republic the American model of "intergroup relations" that had emerged in the United States in the 1930s and that sought to fight racism by building educational and activist communities across confessional, ethnic, and racial lines. Second, it introduced to Germans the reigning American social-scientific tool for investigating racism, namely, "prejudice studies," which emphasized the psychological costs of racism for victim and society alike. In doing so, it denationalized the postwar German problem of race by construing racism as a function and pathology of *human,* rather than a uniquely German, psychology. Finally, it helped pioneer the principles on which a liberal discourse of race would be constructed in West Germany.

Although the stated goal of the *Gesellschaft*'s 1952 conference was to facilitate the social acceptance and integration of Black German children into West German society and schools, the psychological approach to race could as easily authorize a policy of social segregation and emigration. Germans advocating these "solutions" professed to be motivated by concern for the well being of the children, who were considered too vulnerable, sensitive, or maladjusted to deal in healthy ways and on a daily basis with their difference from white classmates. As Blacks in a fundamentally white society, the children were considered at risk for developing severe emotional problems.

"Naturally, [they] mostly suffer from the fate of manifestly belonging to an alien race," observed a youth welfare official in Nuremberg. After all, she added, anthropologists had already established a tendency for premature physical and sexual development in "*Mischlingskinder*" that could lead to serious disturbances in school classrooms, orphanages, and foster homes. One ward of the Nuremberg youth welfare office, an Afro-German

boy named Klaus who, by all reports had acclimated well to foster care, was removed from this successful placement at the request of his white foster mother. Although she acknowledged their good relationship thus far, she thought it necessary to take preemptive action as he approached puberty in order to avoid "difficulties" that she felt could ensue between Klaus and his younger foster sister. At the time, Klaus was a mere nine years old. That she could imagine the well-behaved boy as a sexual threat is a sad indication of the cultural currency—and potency—of stereotypes regarding black male sexuality and comportment.[44] The concerns expressed by the Nuremberg youth official and foster mother were not isolated. Rather, they were indicative of a more generalized fear—at the local, state, and even federal levels—that the children's troubled emotional development would culminate in social alienation or socially pathological behavior, such as licentiousness or criminality, once they approached puberty. Highlighting the psychological roots and emotional toll of racism did not necessarily advance integrationist thinking or undermine antiblack stereotypes. Rather, it could as readily translate into heightened wariness regarding the socially *de*stabilizing effects of perceived racial difference.

In the early 1950s, the West German federal Interior Ministry integrated German schools, in effect rejecting the segregationist culture of its powerful American mentor. Given the small, dispersed population of black German children, this was as much a pragmatic as ethical decision, since segregation was hardly a practical alternative. Nonetheless, German officials reveled in the celebratory reception they received from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the African American press, which pointed out the great strides made by the formerly Nazi nation when compared to the United States. What *Ebony* magazine and others missed, however, was that the West German Interior Ministry also ordered German states to collect data on the intellectual, physical, and moral development of Black German children and to detail any academic deficits or problems of socialization that would hamper their "integration into our social and civil order."

The racial anxieties underlying this initiative are evident once considered from a broader demographic perspective. In the first decade after the war, ethnic German refugee children from eastern Europe entered West German schools in far greater numbers than Afro-German children. In the state of Bavaria alone they constituted between 15 and 30 percent annually of school children during this period; at the national level, ethnic German refugees represented more than 90 percent of population growth and a full

one-quarter of West Germany's total population by the end of the decade.[45] Nonetheless, the federal Interior Ministry ordered school and youth officials to investigate the character, abilities, and integration prospects of only Afro-German children, despite their comparatively minute numbers. Clearly, then, the overriding concern was not to facilitate social integration. Rather, such selective study shows that official attention to racial difference and its presumptive national and social consequences persisted well into the postwar period. Simultaneously, West German officials explored the option of adopting Afro-German children abroad.[46]

International Adoption and Racialized Notions of Kinship

As early as 1947, the African American press covered the story of Germany's "brown babies."[47] Interested parties, on both side of the Atlantic, were intent on pursuing Afro-German children's most "proper" placement. Discussions revolved around issues of national belonging and racial fit. In West Germany, the children were typically imagined as *Heimkinder,* or unwanted institutionalized children, despite the fact that just over 10 percent resided outside of families.[48] Ignoring actual demographics, most West German authorities viewed the children as a social problem and advocated international adoption as the preferred solution.

Adoption by African Americans—described as "families of their own kind"—struck German social welfare authorities as a fitting solution since most Germans were unwilling to adopt children from perceived inferior biological or moral backgrounds. Under the Nazi regime, such adoptions by "Aryan" Germans had been legally prohibited in 1939 for "offending the public interest," and existing adoptions deemed "undesirable" could be terminated by the state.[49]

Concerns about heredity and racial-biological factors persisted after 1945 and discouraged adoptions of biracial children by white German couples. It bears noting that the American Military Government in Germany did nothing to counter this response. In fact, when German officials asked for clarification on adoption law in 1948 the American Legal Affairs Branch responded that it had not abrogated the Nazi-era law but found it "politically and ideologically neutral" (the British and Soviets ruled otherwise). The reason for American inaction on this issue was likely attributable to the rigorously racialized adoption practices in the United States at the time. Racial restrictions in forming German families attracted little

American attention after 1945 because the assumptions underlying such policy were similar to the principles and practices informing adoption in America, where whites cleaved to whites, blacks to blacks, and Jews to Jews. Consideration of race in creating elective families through adoption was therefore not viewed by American officials as necessarily Nazi or even undemocratic.[50]

Shortly after the end of military occupation, West Germans liberalized their adoption law. This was not done to encourage ethnic diversity within the German family. Rather, it was to facilitate the adoption of white (mostly ethnic German) children who had been separated from their parents or orphaned in the war.[51] Concurrently with adoption law reform, West German federal, state, and youth officials continued to seek ways to offload the costs and care of Black German children. In 1951, in fact, West German federal Interior Ministry officials pursued negotiations with representatives of the U.S. Displaced Persons Commission to press for the adoption of black occupation children to the United States using non-quota visas available for war orphans. Strikingly, German officials expressed interest in including in their plan children who had *not* been surrendered by their mothers for adoption, even if they were currently living in German families and would end up in orphanages in the United States.[52] While hundreds of adoptions of Afro-German children to the United States did ensue, most, in the end, appear to have been voluntarily arranged by the mothers.

Adoptions of Afro-German children to the United States were encouraged and pursued by African American civilians at home and in the U.S. military in Germany as well. From the late 1940s into the 1950s, the African American press in particular spread the word about the plight of unwanted "half-Negro" children abroad. The *Pittsburgh Courier* and Baltimore *Afro-American* published appeals to their predominantly black readership, urging them to send special CARE packages to "brown babies" and their unwed German mothers.[53] The NAACP and the Urban League also lobbied on behalf of Afro-German children, invoking them to chastise the American government and military leadership about its reluctance to engage in civil rights reform. The NAACP, for example, pointed out that the "problem of the children" was due to prejudicial official policies that didn't permit black GIs to marry their white German girlfriends.

However, the NAACP and Urban League also expressed doubts about whether the children's adoption to the United States, into an American culture of virulent antiblack racism, would be in the best interests of

the child. As Lester Granger of the Urban League put it, "colored children in . . . [the U.S. state of] Georgia, for example, . . . are much worse off than colored children in Germany."[54] In 1952, Walter White of the NAACP issued press releases praising West Germany's decision to integrate schools without regard to race, noting with irony that the former fascist foe surpassed the democratic United States in racial tolerance and equality. In addition, by the mid-1950s, increasing numbers of Americans began adopting Amerasian children. Published exposés of these children's appalling living conditions in Japan and Korea made Germany's treatment of Afro-German children appear beneficent and broad-minded by comparison. As a result, American youth welfare workers—black and white—increasingly questioned whether intervention on behalf of the Germany's "brown babies" was necessary or advisable.[55]

Black Americans on the ground in West Germany saw things differently. Mrs. Mabel Grammer, occasional correspondent for the Baltimore *Afro-American* and wife of a U.S. warrant officer based near Mannheim, observed the miserable economic conditions of some of the children and their mothers in West Germany and actively sought black adoptive parents. Publicizing the children's plight and working closely with local German public and religious youth offices and orphanages, she facilitated up to 700 adoptions between 1951 and 1953 and remained active into the 1960s. Grammer received assistance from West German authorities, who preferred adopting the children to Americans—and especially African Americans—both for reasons of racial "fit" and to release German taxpayers from the costs of the children's care.[56]

Although West German state and local officials eagerly cooperated with Mrs. Grammer through most of 1950s, even permitting proxy adoptions, by late in the decade they began to have second thoughts. Economic recovery fueled more domestic German adoption requests, albeit for white children. Since white German children were also eagerly sought for adoption by white Americans, German federal officials began to demand more stringent regulation of international adoptions in order to keep such "desirable" progeny at home in the Federal Republic.[57]

As a result, the late 1950s marked a retreat from transatlantic adoptions. When it came to Afro-German children, however, West German authorities offered a different rationale for discouraging adoptions to the United States. To explain their policy shift, the federal ministries generalized from the case of "Otto." Charging that the boy suffered severe emotional trauma after being placed with an African American family, Ger-

man ministry memos warned against similar future placements because of both the child's shock at and inability to adjust to an all-black adoptive family and neighborhood, and the child's subjection to racial segregation and Jim Crow laws in the democratic United States. Since white German families were still not adopting biracial children in any significant numbers,[58] the preferred destination for such children became Denmark where, German commentators curiously insisted, racial prejudice was nonexistent.[59]

By the early 1960s, international adoptions of Black German children to Denmark outpaced those to the United States.[60] In contrast to the troubling reports on adoptive Black German children in the United States, West German officials and social workers painted a picture of easy integration due to the elevated class background of the parents and their assured cultural competence in easing the children from a German context to a Danish one. Denmark was portrayed in terms of cultural similarity: it was like Germany, only better, since prospective Danish parents seemed "more broad-minded about the children's origins." Moreover, German psychologists concerned with the children's emotional development in the segregated United States now described Danish mothers as more culturally compatible and less overbearing than the "black mammies" who, a decade before, had been seen as "natural" nurturers to the children.[61] By claiming to act in the best interests of the child, the West German state cultivated its role as protector and used its experience in international adoptions to provide a critical comparative perspective on the social progress of American and German democracy. Within a decade and a half of Nazi defeat, West German officials could claim a moral victory when it came to race relations and declared the provisional period of postwar racial reeducation closed.

Integration . . . and Its Limits

By the turn of the 1960s, as the oldest of the postwar cohort of Black German youth concluded their education, the public and official focus shifted from the question of "where the children most properly belonged" to the issue of integration into the West German economy. Historically low unemployment aided this process. These were, after all, the early years of the "guest worker" program, when some major West German industries began to import southern European and, later, Turkish workers to address a

growing labor shortage. As Black German teens joined the workforce, municipal and state employment offices tracked their movements and reported the ready cooperation of West German employers in providing training and jobs, as well as the teenagers' unbiased absorption into working life. Press reports, official memos, and academic assessments projected the image of a stable and prosperous democracy whose bureaucrats and employers operated according to principles of social equality and economic rationality. In brief order, integration was declared a success—but only because integration was defined and pursued in *exclusively economic* rather than more broadly social terms.[62]

While social policy interest in black German children subsided by the early 1960s in West Germany, sporadic media attention continued and centered on two general themes. The first concerned the alleged social progress and economic privilege accorded Blacks in Germany by the 1970s; the second concerned the allure of black female sexuality. Press coverage took the form of follow-up stories purporting to answer the question of how "the Germans with dark skin" were faring since they reached adulthood. While noting examples of racial prejudice and racist epithets Black Germans had weathered during their young lives, the articles were upbeat, optimistic, and self-congratulatory. In large measure, this was the result of media proclivity to profile the biographies of performers, personalities, and sports figures—in short, celebrities whose careers contrasted sharply with the mundane blue- and pink-collar work performed by most young Black Germans but who were nonetheless treated as representative of the entire postwar cohort of German "*Mischlingskinder.*" For example, weekly magazines highlighted the achievements of "Jimmy" Georg Hartwig, who grew up in miserable circumstances in Offenbach and braved childhood taunts of "nigger pig" and "whore's son" to become a soccer star in Munich. Or Georg Steinherr who had to learn to protect himself from bullies as a small child and put his resulting "aggressiveness" to good use as a professional boxer.

By the 1970s, the West German magazine *Quick* borrowed the American phrase "Black is beautiful" to report on the various ways that biracial German women benefited from the current mode and marketability of their black skin. *Quick* showcased Nicky, "a poor orphan child, abandoned by her parents," now transformed into a stunning long-legged temptress (and featured in a full-page magazine photo), who worked in a Munich boutique and turned the heads of men as she walked down the street. Rosi, who as a child tried to scrub her "dark skin clean" after being cruelly

ridiculed as a "*Niggerkind*" by classmates, was now a fashion model earning a lucrative daily rate of six to eight hundred German marks thanks to her "dark, exotic" looks. Such magazine articles betrayed a voyeuristic fascination with black female physicality and sexuality, and incessantly invoked these as a powerful stimulant of white male desire.[63] Even respectable newspapers like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* could not help noting the young women's "attraktive Andersartigkeit," or attractive (racial) difference, in sociological discussions of the teens' integration into the workforce.[64] Illustrated weeklies ran racy photo-essays that promised an intimate peek into the personal lives and sexual relationships of Black German women and white German men. Interracial sex was titillating and therefore profitable for the print media.[65] However, there were limits. Relationships between Black German men and white German women did not become the subject of magazine features. That particular gendering of interracial unions apparently offended the boundaries of social acceptability and marketability in the 1970s—even for the West German tabloid press.[66]

In this connection, it is worth noting that one aspect of postwar German reconstruction to receive scant attention is the issue of continuity and rupture in social norms regarding sexual relations between white Germans and ethnic minorities. Indeed 1945 did not disturb the prerogatives of white German men to engage in nonmatrimonial, nonreproductive sexual relations with women perceived as racial others. These liaisons, while not openly condoned by the German majority, were nonetheless tolerated. By the 1970s, in the wake of the American civil rights and Black Power movements, interracial relationships appear to have become increasingly attractive to socially progressive, politically radical German men seeking to advertise their cosmopolitan taste, antiracist credentials, and therefore their irrepressibly un-German hip-ness.[67]

Afro-German women, on the other hand, suffered from their cultural image as sex objects. Carole, a child-care worker in her twenties featured in a 1975 article in the *Neue Illustrierte Revue,* noted that before she could reconcile herself to a relationship with her white German lover, she first needed to overcome the "I-just-want-to-seduce-you-complex" that she had internalized at a younger age in relation to white men. (This was likely not made any easier by the way her lover described his first impression of Carole: "As I saw her in the partial darkness of the cinema I thought, 'What a pretty exotic bird!' I was not averse to the usual little adventure.") Another magazine reported, in an article inexplicably titled "Skin color is no problem," that a young Afro-German woman attempted suicide after a

one-night stand with a white partner.[68] In addition, a Black German woman who was born in 1946 and came of age in the 1960s has described being repeatedly subjected to explicit unwanted sexual advances by male acquaintances and strangers on the street. As a child, she was lectured by the nuns raising her that she—as a black girl—would need to choose between a future as a Christian missionary and life as a prostitute. To them, her race rendered her inherently more sexualized and morally abject than her white counterparts at the orphanage. However, media reports on Afro-Germans through the late 1970s did not focus on such feelings of debased objectification, profound alienation, and worthlessness produced by social interactions and cultural representations so relentlessly cued to notions of "racial difference."[69]

It took until the 1980s for Black Germans to forge a positive identity from the racial designation that had governed their lives. Tellingly, among the first to do so were young women who had been influenced by black feminists from abroad.

> "I've never thought of Afro-German as a positive concept before," she said, speaking out of the pain of having to live a difference that has no name . . .
>
> "Let us be ourselves now as we define us. We are not a figment of your imagination or an exotic answer to your desires. We are not some button on the pocket of your longings."[70]

So wrote African American poet Audre Lorde, describing the political awakening of her Black German students at the Free University in Berlin in the spring of 1984 in the original preface to *Farbe Bekennen* [*Showing our Colors*].[71] Considered a foundational text for the establishment of Afro-German identity and community, *Farbe Bekennen* was one of the first publications to establish the historical presence of Blacks in Germany, to explore their social experience, and to express the emotional and personal repercussions of being treated as alien in a country that is their own.[72] The articulation of "Afro-German" (later "Black German") as a positive personal and social identity emerged through intellectual contact with, and mentoring by, Black American women who, like Lorde, were poets, scholars, and not coincidentally, feminists. Asserting self and voice engaged the dual interlocking identities of race and gender: not only what it meant to be black in a predominantly white Germany but what it meant to be a black woman in that context as well.[73]

This is not to suggest that Afro-German identity was derivative of Afro-American, as it was then called. Rather, it is to recognize both that feminism developed a language with international application and resonance, and that the articulation of Black German identity occurred within the larger conceptual framework of an international Black Diaspora, based upon shared experiences of "oppression," as Lorde suggested, even as these experiences differed according to distinctive national contexts and histories. In the 1980s—as in the late 1940s and 1950s—reformulations of notions of race, identity, and nation in Germany were part of a larger transnational dialogue with African Americans and the American experience of race and gender. The critical concepts and terminology that Lorde and others introduced to their German students in the early 1980s assisted them in their social analysis and allowed them to reject their received identities as "*Mischlinge,*" "*Besatzungskinder,*" and "*Negerin*" and conceive of themselves in a self-affirmative way as Afro-Germans. Afro-German identity was galvanized through dialogue with African American intellectuals; nonetheless comparisons with the African American experience were only one point of reference for the development of Afro-German identity. Black Germans have also looked to postcolonial experiences and social theorizing of Africans and other Black Europeans. And since they hail from diverse family backgrounds, Black Germans have traveled to African nations, in addition to the United States, in search of self-knowledge, political subjectivity, and a sense of belonging—precisely the things that had eluded them in the Federal Republic.[74]

Social and Epistemic Consequences of West Germany's Retreat from "Race"

Following the defeat and international condemnation of National Socialism, West Germans made Afro-German children integral to their postwar process of national rehabilitation and social redefinition, albeit as *objects* of social policy. Unlike other minority groups in postwar Germany, Black German children were minors with German citizenship and therefore under German control, rather than that of the Allies or UN, as was the case for surviving Jews and other DPs. This allowed German officials to conflate issues of race with juvenile stewardship: whatever the policy proposed, Germans claimed to be working in the "best interests" of the child rather than the state.

West German anthropologists, psychologists, social workers, and officials, from the federal down to the local levels, learned from America to generate new scientific knowledge and social policies to confront the challenges of racial difference they believed the children embodied. It was by means of this process—and in explicit comparative reference to the practices of the still-segregationist United States—that German notions of race were renegotiated and revised. Along the way, the children were rendered a stimulus for, and a test of, West Germany's new democratic ethos.

In the early 1960s, having exhausted the children's use as advertisement of West Germany's successful democratic transformation, official and public attention to the children sharply subsided in the Federal Republic, and the "*Mischlingskind*" receded as an object of social policy. One significant step in this direction was the resistance encountered by the federal Ministry of the Interior when its officials in 1960 ordered West German *Länder* (states) to conduct another survey of the numbers of "*Mischlingskinder*" in their jurisdictions. The state cultural minister of Schleswig-Holstein refused outright, citing both pragmatic concerns (such as understaffing) and legal principle (such as the constitutional prohibition on singling out individuals on the basis of race). While these objections came from a state with a minuscule black population, the rebuke effectively nullified the German Ministry of the Interior's practice since the Nazi years of keeping separate statistics on black children.[75]

As a result, official and public discussions regarding the role of race *within* the Federal Republic subsided. As "*Mischlingskinder*" disappeared as a racialized object of social policy, the use of the word *Rasse* and reference to things "racial" were rendered taboo, at least as applied to contemporary German society. In effect, the postwar problem of race, which had been narrowly focused on the problem of the postwar "*Mischlingskind,*" was declared solved by West German officials and the media once the oldest cohort had been integrated into the workforce. Afterward, the Federal Republic embraced an antihistorical fantasy of harmonious ethnoracial homogeneity among its national citizenry.

The 1960s initiated a new era, continuing to this day, in which difference and its perceived social disruptions have been transferred to the bodies, beliefs, and cultures of Germany's immigrant populations.[76] Since then, discriminatory behavior and violence in Germany have been commonly interpreted as motivated by "xenophobia" or hatred of *foreigners.* This response is an interpretative act with significant social effects. For it casts the problem as a contemporary one born of an uncomfortable period

of adjustment issuing from the end of the Cold War, the demise of social-ism, the ensuing surge of immigration, and growth of Islamic radicalism. That is, it locates the *origins* of the problem as *external* to the German nation and German history, rather than treating the problem as connected to a longer, complex native history of racism and notions of race.

The refusal to speak the name of "race" has not extinguished either racialized notions of difference or expressions of racism in Germany in the six decades since 1945. What it has done, until recently, is to deprive German minorities of a critical analytical lens and language with which to effectively confront and counter everyday experiences of social exclusion—and, as important, to compare these across ethnic identification. For decades, Germans who grew up as postwar "*Mischlingskinder*" thought their problems were personal ones, due to individual inadequacies of appearance, intellect, or morality. Only as adults, and increasingly since the 1980s, have they come to recognize the problem of "race" as historical, structural, and sociological: as a persistent, powerful ideological presence that has shaped their lives in spite of who they are as individuals. Since the 1990s, invoking "race" and attending to instances of "racism" has allowed Black Germans to join with other minorities—of Turkish, African, Arabic, Asian, Latin American, and Jewish heritage—to compare shared experiences of discrimination, violence, and social marginality and to cooperate to pursue social equality and justice within Germany.[77] Acknowledging the continuing social and cultural valence of "race" in contemporary Germany need not serve to embolden racism or neofascism. Rather, it can produce—and has produced—the political and epistemological *possibilities* for exposing and eradicating ethnoracial hatred and violence through the efforts of cross-group coalitions. In this sense, reclaiming "race" as a category of analysis and action has been politically enabling, socially progressive, and historically illuminating. German minorities have begun to put this lesson to good use. It is time for historians of Germany to learn from their experiences and follow suit.