

**Carney, Amy. (2018). Marriage and Fatherhood in the Nazi SS
Toronto: University of Toronto Press.**

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Amy Carney's book, "Marriage and Fatherhood in the Nazi SS" describes the ideology of Heinrich Himmler a leader of the SS. The SS was a paramilitary group belonging to the Nazi Party. Their main purpose was to transform their organization into a racially elite family community. They wanted to produce racially elite children belonging to the Aryan Race and Nordic blood which at the time was seen as the superior race compared to all other races in Europe. To put this ideology into place they used the science of eugenics to control SS members' bloodline placing rules on who they could and could not marry. Marriage policies were put into place that included a person needing to file an application in order to marry someone. Propaganda was used to inform citizens and SS members of the correct Nazi ideology; having photographs to display affection of fathers to their children and showing what is appropriate and not appropriate for men in terms of racial identification of women they may marry. This was seen as important as children were the key to success of Germany. Without the correct Aryan race and Nordic bloodline, the future of Germany would be in jeopardy. The book's overall theme is around this ideology. It can be seen throughout the book as it is emphasized as an importance for Germany to produce racially elite children.

Carney discusses how Himmler was the first to use eugenics for selective breeding and this can be seen in his implementation of rules in marriage. The process of marriage was very

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meticulous as SS members had to obtain permission to marry and had to seek approval from the Nazi SS. An application was applied for marriage by a SS member looking to marry. This process took months as it was very carefully looked at to see the genealogical tree of both the male and female involved in the possible marriage. This was done so “their hereditary health was still examined for any faults that could affect their future children, especially if they later sought to join the family community as a member or spouse” (p. 25). They looked for any possible medical issues that could prevent either the male or female from producing racially elite children. The SS member and the future bride would also have to go through medical examinations individually to see if both were fertile and could even produce children. If they were not, they would be denied the opportunity to marry as the marriage would be unsuccessful in bearing children. But what makes this process so meticulous is that they looked at the genealogical tree all the way back to 1750. This was done so they could see any Jewish descent in the tree which would cause for the marriage application to be denied.

Marriage was seen as an integral part of Germany’s future success but the importance of marriage was to produce racially elite children. Marriage applications were scrutinized because “Marriage cannot be an end in itself, but must serve the one higher goal, the increase and preservation of the species and the race” (p. 45). The SS member and wife marrying needed to be fertile and have the right blood in order to produce racially elite children. Producing children was a vital duty of marriage which needed to be done to maintain society and keep Germany as an elite country. These children were seen to carry on the legacy of the SS members and protect the future of the SS family community “ Every child strengthened the family community, and in turn, this

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community had the potential to secure the future of the Reich by ensuring its longevity as a racial state” (p. 45).

The Aryan race and Nordic blood were seen to be the cause of success in Europe. The most dominate countries in Europe were seen to have an Aryan race and Nordic blood. It was seen to be vital to produce as many children belonging to this race and blood in Germany. Because of this ideology the rule to have at least four children per marriage was introduced and any marriage that produced four children was seen as a successful marriage.

The rule of four children per marriage was greatly influenced during the time of war in Germany. “[The] war greatly influenced the development of SS families. The need to populate the family community, while crucial in the pre-war years, took on greater significance during the war” (p. 95). Procreation was seen as vital to protect the SS family community and all the people of Germany. During the war, many SS soldiers were being killed in action and the good blood was being lost in battle. By producing at least four children per marriage, it was seen that this would help balance out the wartime loss and even out the lineage for the men that died.

Himmler influenced SS members to produce more children to ensure the future success of the SS family community. He even placed rewards as families who had more children received more money. This helped families and gave them an incentive in producing more children. He wanted all SS soldiers, before going to war, to have at least one child to carry on their lineage in case they died in action. Because of soldiers leaving for the war, it left their wives behind and vulnerable for other SS members to produce children with them. Himmler did not do anything

about this as he wanted the number of children to increase. “Neither marriage nor infidelity was about pleasure or happiness; everything in his belief system related to reproduction” (p. 111).

Propaganda was used to portray the importance of having a family with as many children as possible. Children of racially elite blood were highly valued in SS family community as seen by the emphasize for reproduction. People without a child were missing out on something precious and the media was used to influence people. Newspapers used stories to influence people to get married young and help the family community by having marriages that produced children. The media influenced not only the women to be a primary caregiver but men as well. The media promoted fatherhood and helped portray the fact that men could be primary caregivers just as well as women. The role of masculinity was being questioned as men were seen in society as someone who was the breadwinner of a family, while women were seen to be a part of more domestic roles. But the media helped break this societal norm down and helped break the stigma in their messages to the public. It was said that men should not take over the women’s role completely but could help them with the children. “It stated plainly that a father should not take over the responsibilities of a mother, but it was permissible for a man to assist his wife with domestic duties” (p. 56).

Carney through this book intends to educate us about eugenics through the SS family community. She helps us understand how eugenics was implemented and some of the downfalls that selective breeding caused. Carney discusses why Himmler’s ideology of the Aryan Race and Nordic blood did not succeed. She mentions that with all the methods and rules implemented to help the birth rates in Germany. He did not account for the obstacles in place. “A range of social, economic and educational factors created obstacles that could have influenced the development of

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family polices.” (p. 180). Some of these obstacles stopped families from wanting to satisfy Himmler’s ideology of producing more children. For example, the Great Depression discouraged SS couples from wanting more children as they worried that they could not sustain a large family financially. Another problem brought up was that because of the prestige of the SS community, only people with a higher education level applied. This meant that they were older in age due to the many years studying in schools. This led to SS men marrying in their older ages and not being able to produce as many children as needed.

Carney’s attended audience could include people from the psychology field especially people studying the history of psychology and eugenics program, but even people interested in Germany’s affairs during the Nazi Government’s reign would be intrigued in reading this book. This book did not contain any limitations. It provided quotes from SS leaders like Hitler and Himmler and provided images of some of the propaganda used to help influence birth rates among SS members. It even included statistics to demonstrate birth rates and marriages in the SS family community. This book would be recommended as it does a great job describing the racial policy of Nazi Germany’s time, which gives us an insight into the mind of SS leaders who caused the holocaust; the world’s largest genocide in history.