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“For The Homeland”: Die Deutsche Hausfrau and Reader Responses to World War I

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**“FOR THE HOMELAND”: *DIE DEUTSCHE HAUSFRAU* AND READER RESPONSES
TO WORLD WAR I**

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
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ABSTRACT

“FOR THE HOMELAND”: *DIE DEUTSCHE HAUSFRAU* AND READER RESPONSES TO WORLD WAR I

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Old Dominion University, 2018
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When the Great War broke out in the summer of 1914, many German Americans living in the United States expressed renewed support and loyalty for Germany in the German-language press. While scholars have thoroughly examined the collective experiences and sentiments of German Americans in the U.S. during World War I, particularly in their press, German-American women and their press have remained largely underrepresented. Notably, however, as evidenced by the largest nationally circulated monthly women’s journal of the time, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* (The German Housewife), German-American women did indeed use their press as well to convey increasingly pro-German rhetoric in support of their “old homeland” through their letters to the editor. Readers’ letters reveal that they expressed their support for Germany in two distinct ways: by embracing and sharing in the politics of the war and by advocating for the importance of the multiple facets of their German heritage, such as language, homeland, relatives, and culture. Through this use of the press to express themselves, readers strengthened their role as active members of their local and international communities, merged their private and public spheres, and reinforced ties to their German cultural and political identity. Although the legislative restrictions placed on the press after the U.S. joined the war shifted the pro-German and transnational tone of the magazine to focus more on American interests in the war, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* continued to emphasize the role of German-American women in society and their contributions to their communities.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents and husband, without whose help the completion of this thesis would not have been possible.

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On a more personal note, the completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the help of my parents, to whom I owe a great deal for spending countless hours with my daughter so that I could finish my thesis. It was also them who instilled in me an interest and appreciation for history at a young age and who first introduced me to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. For all of these things, I am very grateful.

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CHAPTER 1

“WE COULD NEVER LIVE WITHOUT IT”: *DIE DEUTSCHE HAUSFRAU*, GERMAN-AMERICANS, AND THE CRISIS OF WORLD WAR I

INTRODUCTION

We are happy that all German newspapers stand together unanimously for German justice. If we Germans didn't have our dear German press here during this terrible time, how discouraged and disheartened we would feel, as we would only have the English newspapers to read. I hope and wish day and night for a victory for the Germans in their righteous cause. The dear 'Hausfrau' shares these concerns with us, and we are all so glad. We could never live without it.¹

- Frau Maria M. of Iowa, May 1915

During the early years of World War I, hundreds of letters like the one from Frau Maria M. above appeared in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* (The German Housewife), one of the most widely circulated German-language women's publications in the United States at the time. In these letters to the editor, readers often wrote of their allegiance to Germany, their support for their fellow countrymen still living in Germany, their willingness to help the German cause, and a desire to keep the German spirit alive in their new homeland. Such sentiments were shared by a number of German Americans across the United States at that time; for many first-, second-, and even third-generation Americans of German descent living in the U.S. in 1914, the news that Germany was at war evoked strong feelings of support for their old homeland. As the war progressed during the first three years of American neutrality, support for the "Fatherland" continued and was openly expressed in many ways, such as through fundraisers and donation drives for German soldiers and civilians. Perhaps the most galvanizing and far-reaching platform for such expressions of German support in the U.S. was the German-American mainstream press.

¹ Maria M., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 42. The translations of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* that appear throughout this thesis were completed by the author of this paper.

A massive and influential industry in the U.S. since the mid-nineteenth century, it became particularly effective during the period of American neutrality as a medium for advocating the merits and preservation of the German language and for expressing a renewed sense of German nationalism. While scholars have thoroughly examined the collective experiences and sentiments of German Americans in the United States during World War I, particularly in their press, German-American women and their press have remained largely underrepresented. However, as evidenced by the letters published in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, such as the one above from Frau Maria M., German-American women did indeed use their press to convey increasingly pro-German rhetoric in support of their old homeland.

This thesis explores the content of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and the letters to the editor that were published from 1914 to 1918 to examine pro-German sentiments and opinions put forth by German-American women during the early years of World War I. One of the initial research questions guiding this analysis is how readers responded to the pro-German and often nationalistic content of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* in expressing their own support for Germany. In reviewing the war time issues of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* prior to U.S. involvement, I found that the magazine and the women who wrote to it expressed their support for Germany in two distinct ways. First, they embraced and shared in the politics of the war, topics previously disconnected from German-American womanhood. As their letters reveal, readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* responded positively to the coverage of the war in the magazine and the more political tone that it adopted with the beginning of the war in the fall of 1914. Prior to the war, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* had conveyed a more affable tone in regard to relations between the U.S. and Germany and encouraged readers to embrace both sides of their German-American identity. However, after the war began in Europe, the content of the magazine began to focus predominantly on

Germany and the war. This often included a less than favorable opinion of the U.S. due to the aid given to Great Britain while claiming neutrality. In response to this shift in the content of the magazine from more female-centric topics of home and hearth to more war-centric topics of battle and politics, a number of readers wrote to the editor to praise the magazine's coverage of the war and the newfound nationalistic rhetoric it espoused. Furthermore, many readers expressed their own views in support of Germany in similar militaristic and political terms such as allegiance to the Kaiser, praising Germany's performance in battle, and glorifying the German soldiers.

Secondly, readers also responded to the war through more traditional, maternal roles by advocating for the importance of the multiple facets of their German heritage such as language, homeland, relatives, and culture. Since its beginning in 1904, a central theme of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* had been the preservation of German language and culture and this focus became more pronounced in the content of the magazine during the early years of the war. In response, readers' letters to the editor reveal that they also cherished these connections to their German heritage and increasingly constructed their support for Germany in terms of preserving the German language, customs, homeland, and relationships with friends and relatives still living in Germany. Furthermore, the letters indicate that readers valued these ties to their German heritage despite the fact that many had lived in the U.S. for several years or had even been born in the U.S.

In addition to illustrating how readers responded to the pro-German content of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* in expressing their own support for Germany during the war, this thesis also explores the significance of readers' use of the press to blend their domestic and public worlds, women's involvement in their immediate and international German communities, and their

strong sense of German political and cultural identity. First, the magazine and its readers constructed their support for Germany in two distinct ways that represented traditional and non-traditional roles of German-American womanhood at that time. However, readers used the magazine to participate in larger discourses about the war through their letter writing and this allowed them to effortlessly merge these traditional and non-traditional roles, comfortably engaging with the magazine and its female editors on the topics of war and politics, but also their perceived duties as wives or mothers to preserve and maintain aspects of German heritage. In this sense, by also stepping out beyond the domestic sphere and their traditional gender roles into the very public and international realm of politics and war, female readers politicized themselves, the magazine, and the domestic sphere they inhabited, blending their public and private worlds.

Secondly, in addition to donation drives, war bazaars, and other activities that German-American women participated in such as women's auxiliary groups and clubs, their use of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* to express their sense of Germanness positioned them as active members of both their local German-American community and their larger trans-Atlantic German community with other female readers and relatives in Germany. Using the press, German women participated in both communities and supported their homeland by publicly expressing political support for Germany and through more traditional duties in the home like preserving ties to German culture, heritage, language, and family. However, although the preservation of German heritage followed more traditional maternal roles, it was not viewed by readers as restrictive and frivolous. On the contrary, both domestic and public displays of support for Germany were valued as active participation in the pro-Germany movement.

Thirdly, this use of the press to publicly support Germany and their direct involvement in the issues facing their local and international German communities also reveals the strength of readers' German identity during a time when anti-German hysteria had caused much of the German element in the U.S. to recede. Women's continuing and even intensified closeness to their German roots demonstrates that not all Germans responded to xenophobic sentiment by abandoning expressions of Germanness. Rather, German-American women reacted to the war by celebrating all things German – including the political discourse regarding the war and Germany and the movement for increased cultural preservation. By responding to the war both in terms of politics and culture, female readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* projected a strong attachment to their German identity that included both a cultural and political sense of belonging and inclusion.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This study of pro-German rhetoric expressed by German-American women builds on the history of German immigration, the German-language press, and the political, social and cultural implications of World War I, including anti-German hysteria.

History of Germans in the United States

The history of Germans in the U.S. is a robust one that parallels the history of the United States itself. The first German immigrants arrived in 1607 as part of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the “New World.” Germans continued to migrate to the U.S. at increasing rates throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Five million German immigrants arrived in the U.S. in the nineteenth century alone. Between 1830 and 1930, one in six immigrants to the U.S. was German speaking. By 1900, there were eight million people of

first- or second-generation German descent living in the U.S. This comprised one tenth of the total U.S. population and therefore made Germans the largest non-English speaking group in the U.S. at that time.²

Although they are often referred to collectively as “German,” immigrants who came to the U.S. prior to 1871 hailed from numerous German-speaking kingdoms, duchies, and other principalities that existed prior to the establishment of a unified German empire in 1871. German immigrants often came to the U.S. as a family, settling near other German families and establishing German communities in their new homeland. This led to the creation of large, concentrated German speaking towns across the U.S. In some areas, the German language was the main language of communication. In both large cities and in some small towns, the enormity of the German presence could be felt by the prevalence of German restaurants, churches, schools, and clubs.³

History of the German-Language Press in the United States

Perhaps one of the most telling examples of the enormity of the German cultural presence in America in the years leading up to World War I was the ubiquity and popularity of the German-American press. The first German-language newspaper in the U.S., the *Philadelphische Zeitung* began in 1732.⁴ By 1890, over one thousand German-language newspapers were being published in the U.S.⁵ The German-language press far outnumbered any other foreign-language press in the U.S. In 1885, for example, the German-language press made up 79 percent of all the

² Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 98, 110-111.

³ Erik Kirschbaum, *The Eradication of German Culture in the United States: 1917-1918* (Stuttgart, Germany: Hans Dieter Heinz Academic Publishing, 1986), 36-39.

⁴ Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1973), 14.

⁵ Elliott Shore, Ken Fones-Wolf, and James P. Danky, eds., *The German-American Radical Press: The Shaping of a Left Political Culture, 1850-1940* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 3.

foreign-language press in the U.S.⁶ Every major American city had at least one German-language newspaper and many cities with large German speaking populations such as Philadelphia, St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and New York had five or more.⁷

German-American women served as an important audience for the German-language press. The earliest example of German-American women's press was the *Deutsche Frauenzeitung*, published in Milwaukee from 1852 to 1854 by the feminist and suffragette Mathilde Franziska Anneke to address women's rights and equality. However, it was not until the turn-of-the-twentieth century that the German-American women's press evolved into a more prominent, permanent segment of the German-language press in the U.S. Until that time the industry had largely overlooked and underestimated the reading desires of women. However, by the late 1890s, papers attempted to broaden their audience by expanding their readership to include women. Other American mainstream newspapers and magazines, such as the *Ladies Home Journal*, had implemented a similar strategy to much success. As advertising income became increasingly important to the media industry during this time, publishers across the U.S. began to benefit from the consumer driven industrial society and the purchasing role that women were beginning to play in it. Like the mainstream English-language press, the German-American press also evolved to match the growing segment of female readers and appeal to the ever more present feminine dynamic of consumption.⁸

One of the initial ways that the German-language press began to actively cater to the female reader around the turn-of-the-twentieth century was through the addition of "women's

⁶ Monika Blaschke, "Communicating the Old and the New: German Immigrant Women and Their Press in Comparative Perspective around 1900," in *People in Transit: German Migrations in Comparative Perspective, 1820-1930*, eds., Dirk Hoerder and Jörg Nagler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/German Historical Institute, 1995), 315.

⁷ James M. Bergquist, "The German-American Press," in *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook*, ed. Sally M. Miller (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 142.

⁸ Blaschke, "Communicating the Old and New," 313, 315-316, 321.

pages” to their papers. The *New Yorker Staatszeitung*, a mainstream paper, was the first German-language publication to create a woman’s page.⁹ It was titled “Unter uns Frauen” (Among us Women) and first appeared on March 22, 1891. Within the first month, the paper added a “Briefkasten” (Mailbox) section where readers could write in with questions and a figure named Frau Anna would respond. While it started as three columns, this women’s section of the *New Yorker Staatszeitung* grew to a full page within the first year and into three pages by 1900. In 1909 it added another page with more sewing patterns and recipes called “Was Frauen Interessiert” (Women’s Interests). In 1910 it started being published as an eight-page supplement and it continued in that format throughout the decade.¹⁰

While German Americans who lived in large urban areas could readily access the German-language press in their local city, those that who lived in rural areas had a harder time acquiring press material until changes in federal postage legislation and price influenced the evolution of the German-language magazine. In 1885 Congress reduced the cost of second-class periodical mail by half and magazines grew in popularity all over the country. However, while the magazine industry continued to grow throughout the late 1800s, it was not until the Post Office Department (which became the U.S. Postal Service in 1971) implemented Rural Free Delivery across the U.S. in 1902, that even more German speakers gained regular access to the German-language press. With this new service, people living in rural areas began to receive mail delivered directly to their farm rather than having to travel some distance to a post office to pick it up. As a result, magazines ultimately achieved the highest circulation numbers of any

⁹ Blaschke, “Communicating the Old and New,” 317.

¹⁰ Peter Conolly-Smith, *Translating America: An Immigrant Press Visualizes American Popular Culture, 1895-1918* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 114.

German-language press in the U.S.¹¹ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, the subject of this analysis, is an example of such a magazine.

History of World War I and Anti-German Hysteria in the United States

After the Great War broke out in Europe in late summer 1914, the U.S. declared its neutrality. However, Germany's continued use of submarine warfare in the Atlantic and the interception of the Zimmerman telegram by British intelligence intensified public opinion against Germany during the early years of the war and in April 1917 the U.S. joined the Allies against Germany and the Central Powers. Between U.S. entry in the war and the war's end in November 1918, the U.S. sent over four million troops to Europe.¹²

Although the U.S. was not officially involved for the first three years, the war dominated the political and economic mood of the U.S. during that time. As a major supplier of wartime munitions for the British, many industries in the U.S. profited from the war. In addition, the U.S. loaned money to the Allies for the war effort. In general, although the U.S. was officially neutral, many Americans and institutions unofficially supported and sympathized with Great Britain and the Allies.¹³

When the war began in Europe in 1914, an estimated twenty million people in the U.S. were German born immigrants or their descendants.¹⁴ For many of them, U.S. direct and indirect support of the Allies during the period of neutrality was problematic. The collective German-American stance was that the U.S. should not get involved in the conflict at all and should

¹¹ Blaschke, "Communicating the Old and New," 317-318, and United States Postal Service Historian, "Postage Rates for Periodicals: A Narrative History," United States Postal Service, <https://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/periodicals-postage-history.htm>, June 2010, (accessed May 3, 2014).

¹² Rebecca U. Thorpe, *The American Warfare State: The Domestic Politics of Military Spending* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 83.

¹³ Carl Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1936), 55-56.

¹⁴ Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), 413.

therefore not send military supplies or give loans to either side. However, in the minds of many Americans, including President Woodrow Wilson, such inaction would ultimately serve to actually benefit Germany. Although he never referred to German Americans specifically by name, President Wilson made several public statements doubting the loyalty of any American who promoted ideas that could be seen as a threat to America's best interest.¹⁵

As the war went on, this subtle political unease surrounding those suspected of being disloyal to the interests of the U.S. transformed into blatant distrust of German Americans. By 1915, on the heels of a rampant anti-German propaganda campaign that had been raging in Great Britain, many Americans came to view Germany as the enemy. This anti-German sentiment escalated in April 1917 when the U.S. officially joined the war against Germany. Although President Wilson had publicly declared that the fight was against the government of Germany and not its people, many Americans began to question the allegiance of their German-American neighbors and rumors about an infiltration of spies consumed the American public. Such doubts and feelings of ill will toward German Americans were only strengthened by the actions and publications of governmental agencies and organizations. Groups such as the Committee on Public Information, the American Protective League, the National Security League, and the American Defense League fueled the anti-German hysteria by harassing German Americans and their institutions and promoting a hyper-patriotic distrust of all things German. Even state and local agencies participated in the anti-German hysteria by banning the German language in schools, newspapers, church services, public meetings, and on telephones. Many also called for German newspapers to cease publication and German social groups to change their names and organizational records to English.¹⁶

¹⁵ Luebke, *Germans in the New World*, 34.

¹⁶ Luebke, *Germans in the New World*, 34-39.

The German language was indeed an explicit focus of anti-German public policy. In addition to banning German language and books in public schools, the German-language press was also targeted. Both the government and the American public regarded the German-American press as one of the main vehicles for displaying disloyal and anti-American views. In the early years of the war, the German-American press did indeed publish pro-German rhetoric in an effort to voice Germany's version of the war and therefore counter the anti-German propaganda that was being funneled to the American newspapers via the British newswire. The German Information Service and the National German-American Alliance were the source of much of the pro-German literature and many German-American papers supported and printed these views.¹⁷ As a result, the German-language press enjoyed a period of increased circulation as German Americans clamored for this press as the only source they could trust about the war.¹⁸ However, by June 1917 with the passing of the Espionage Act, the German-language press became restricted on a national scale. The Espionage Act made it illegal to send through the mail any material that supported treason or insurrection. As a result, many German-language publications were forced to alter their style to reflect a more patriotic tone for the U.S. for fear of losing mailing privileges or facing criminal charges. By October 1917, the Trading with the Enemy Act required all foreign-language papers to submit English translations of any article that concerned the war or the U.S. to the postmaster general for approval before it could be printed. When an approved article was finally printed in a German-language publication, the statement: "True translation filed with the postmaster at _____ on _____ (naming the post office where the translation was filed and the date of filing thereof), as required by the Act of Oct. 6, 1917" had to

¹⁷ Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War*, 24-27

¹⁸ Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, 242-244.

appear above it.¹⁹ Publications could apply for exemption permits that would allow them to publish without having to file translations, but in the meantime many German-language papers folded due to the financial burden caused by the delay in printing.

The censorship of the German-American press was then further extended in May 1918 when the Sedition Act, an amendment to the Espionage Act, was passed. Under this law, it became a crime to “willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language” about the U.S. and its government, constitution, or military. It also made it illegal to advocate the success of the enemy or to support a reduction in the production of war time supplies.²⁰ This dealt another blow to the once robust German-American press. Papers were either forced to conform to pro-American expectations or suspend their publications. Of the more than five hundred German-language papers that existed before the start of the war, around half of them had ceased publication by the end of the war.²¹ In addition to the effects on the German-language press, the anti-German hysteria significantly impacted social and cultural aspects of German-American life. By the end of the war, any display of German culture or language had become suspect and was essentially outlawed.

Despite the discriminatory political, social, and cultural effects of the war on German Americans, many continued to show unwavering support for Germany and pride in their German heritage. From the beginning of the war up until the U.S. entry in 1917 made such activities deviant and punishable, the German-American community organized humanitarian efforts to collect money and food for German widows and orphans, German soldiers who had been wounded, and German citizens in general who had been affected by the blockades and the

¹⁹ *Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917*, § 19.

²⁰ Petra Dewitt, “Espionage and Sedition Act,” in *Germany and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History*, ed. Thomas Adam (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC - CLIO, 2005), 319-320; Conolly-Smith, *Translating America*, 2, 250; and Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, 270-271.

²¹ Park, *Immigrant Press and Its Control*, 319.

difficulties of a country at war. German-American churches and social organizations actively raised money for the German Red Cross and other relief funds by holding war bazaars, large public ceremonies, theatrical performances, concerts, sewing bees, coffee parties, and other creative events. When the German-American Alliance was later investigated in 1918, it reported that \$886,670.18 had been collected for these funds between 1914 and 1917, but other estimates put the total in the millions. German war bonds were also offered for purchase in the U.S. and many were sold. In addition to social fundraising efforts, in the early years of the war many German Americans protested against the mainstream English-language newspapers that printed anti-German propaganda by writing letters to the editors of these papers, boycotting stores that advertised such propaganda, or attending mass demonstrations that celebrated German culture and condemned the British influence on the American press.

The German-language mainstream press was perhaps the most widely used tool for expressing support for Germany in the early years of the war. Some German Americans were quite staunch in their support for Germany and actively displayed and encouraged overt patronage for the Fatherland by publishing controversial anti-American and pro-German editorials in the mainstream German-language newspapers. The content and coverage of the newspapers themselves also reflected universal support for Germany. German-American newspapers periodically printed the amount of contributions that had been collected to send to the Fatherland. They also sold war and nationalistic memorabilia such as pictures of Kaiser Wilhelm II, war albums, war post cards from Germany, official German casualty lists, souvenir spoons, and flags, and donated a portion of the profits to the relief funds.²² Furthermore, as this analysis of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* demonstrates, the German-American press became particularly effective during the early years of World War I as a medium for advocating the

²² Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War*, 26-36 and Luebke, *Germans in the New World*, 34.

merits and preservation of the German language and for expressing a renewed sense of German nationalism.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTION

This analysis of German-American women and their use of the press to express pro-German sentiments during World War I draws from and contributes to the work of historians and scholars in several related fields, including immigration, the ethnic press, immigrant and German-American women, German Americans in World War I, and German-American identity.

Immigration and Theories of Incorporation

Scholarly works on theories of immigration and integration have differed greatly over the course of the twentieth century and have often been influenced by the surrounding political and social movements of the times. In the early part of the twentieth century, following decades of increasing immigrant population growth, public attitudes towards immigrants were often shaped by widespread xenophobia and legislative acts to slow immigration. As such, the leading theories on immigration at the time, such as Anglo-conformity and the melting pot theory, suggested that immigrants shed their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic ties to their native land and assimilate into American society as homogenous members. Works such as “The Americanization Movement” by Howard C. Hill and *Old World Traits Transplanted* by sociologists of the famed Chicago School, Robert E. Park and Herbert A. Miller, championed such theories.²³ In contrast, in the wake of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, a growing movement towards a “new social history” into the 1970s and 1980s emphasized the persistence of ethnicity among immigrant groups while focusing more on the history of specific minorities through studies of gender, race,

²³ Howard C. Hill, “The Americanization Movement,” *American Journal of Sociology* 24, no. 6 (May 1919): 609-642; Robert E. Park and Herbert A. Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1921).

and class. In immigration studies, this shift in focus resulted in the advancement of new theories of immigrant incorporation such as cultural pluralism and multiculturalism. Cultural pluralism, first introduced by Horace Kallen in 1915, reemerged as the new way of viewing immigrant life in the U.S. and influenced works such as “*Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of The Uprooted*” by Rudolph J. Vecoli and *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* by John Bodnar.²⁴ This new mindset opposed earlier assimilationist theories by emphasizing how immigrant groups in the U.S. successfully retained their unique cultural heritages and by highlighting the merits of cultural diversity in society.²⁵

It is this latter perspective that guides this analysis of the readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and their letters to the editor. Specifically, I argue that many German Americans did indeed retain strong connections to their German culture, language, and heritage, despite wartime pressure to relinquish such connections. While not all Americans of German descent maintained such bonds, the expressions of German nationalism and support put forth by many are important to the broader study of German-American immigration and identity. In this sense, I stress how German Americans retained, rather than lost, a sense of Germanness and how that perseverance ultimately led to the creation of an American society best defined as pluralist rather than homogenous.

In this same vein, this thesis also adopts a transnational framework by underlining the ways immigrants have retained connections to their home countries. The term “transnationalism” is used in a multitude of disciplines and has various applications from economics to psychology,

²⁴ Horace M. Kallen, *The Nation* (New York), February 18 and 25, 1915; Rudolph J. Vecoli, “*Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of The Uprooted*,” *Journal of American History* 51, no. 3 (December 1964): 404-417; John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).

²⁵ This review of immigration theories and defining works draws on Russell A. Kazal, “Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History,” *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (April 1995): 437-471.

but for immigration history it was first used in 1916 in an article by Randolph Bourne to refer to concepts of an immigrant's multiculturalism. The term was later developed as a contemporary framework for studying migration and defined by Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton in the early 1990s as "the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement."²⁶ In their collective work on transnationalism, Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton argued that "transmigrants" – their suggested term to replace "migrant" – "develop and maintain multiple relations - familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders."²⁷ Immigration historians have therefore employed a transnational approach to show how immigrants remained simultaneously embedded in the politics, cultures, and societies of more than one nation state.²⁸ This notion of immigrants transcending nation states to maintain various relations with their homeland is integral to the study of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and readers' letters to the editor. Indeed, as these letters to the editor during World War I demonstrate, the magazine served as a transnational medium for German-American women in the U.S. where they could cultivate and maintain connections to the politics, language, culture, customs, and people of Germany.

The Ethnic Press

The study of the immigrant press (also referred to as foreign-language or ethnic press) first received scholarly attention in the early 1900s as a byproduct of the newfound interest among sociologists in topics of immigration and Americanization. In 1922, Robert E. Park

²⁶ Randolph Bourne, "Trans-National America," *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1916, 86-97; Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration," *Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* 645 (New York: Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1992), 1.

²⁷ Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration," 1.

²⁸ See Matthew Frye Jacobson, "More 'Trans-,' Less 'National,'" *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25, no. 4 (Summer 2006): 74-84; Donna Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 1115-1134.

published *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, which examined the history and sociological significance of the immigrant press and Americanization.²⁹ In a chapter dedicated solely to the topic of immigrant press and assimilation, Park noted the foreign-language press initially allowed immigrants to maintain a connection to their native language and homeland but argued that it ultimately served to further the assimilation of immigrants into American society. As immigration theories changed and developed through the mid and late twentieth century, studies of the immigrant press followed those trends. The next major work published on the immigrant press appeared in 1987 and reflected the movement towards cultural pluralism and multiculturalism. In *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook*, editor Sally M. Miller decried the predictions made under the earlier immigration theories that the ethnic press would eventually die out due to assimilation. Like Park, she noted that the foreign-language press was used by immigrants as a tool for adjustment to American society. However, in contrast to Park, she placed more emphasis on how the ethnic press also expanded ties to culture and language. Furthermore, she asserted that the foreign-language press is a valid source for understanding ethnic Americans as “individual communities” with unique cultural heritages. The edited collection therefore included individual histories of twenty-seven different ethnic-American groups and their press written by various authors.³⁰

In comparing these works, the function of the foreign-language press within immigrant groups is central – how it served as a tool for incorporation into American culture or as a tool for retaining ethnic and cultural ties. In most cases, the foreign-language press has been considered by scholars as both - an agent of acculturation which eased and expedited the diffusion of immigrant and ethnic-Americans into American culture *and* a cherished lifeline that allowed

²⁹ Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922).

³⁰ Sally M. Miller, ed., *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), xi-xxii.

immigrant and ethnic-Americans to stay connected to their culture and heritage. While I too recognize both roles of the immigrant press, this thesis concentrates on the latter role. It is evident in their letters to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* that the magazine offered readers a comforting link to German heritage, culture, and language. Indeed, many readers described their love of the magazine explicitly in terms of the transnational connection it afforded them.

As evidenced by works such as Miller's on individual ethnic groups and their press in the U.S., the topic of German-American print culture has become a field of its own. Since the mid-twentieth century, much has been written about the history of the German-language press in the U.S. Contributing to the volume of such works is the historical prevalence and magnitude of the German-American press. As a dynamic and robust industry that outnumbered any other foreign-language press during its prime, it is deserving of such scholarship.

The chapter on the German-American press by James M. Bergquist in Miller's edited collection exists as one of the most recent comprehensive works on the topic. Bergquist chronicled the evolution of the German-language press in U.S. history and reasoned that its influence in U.S. history was unmatched by any other ethnic press in the U.S. However, he argued that "the German-language press was really an American press published in the German language: its concern was always overwhelmingly with American affairs and the life that the Germans found in the United States, and events and affairs in the old country were usually at the periphery of its interest."³¹

Perhaps the most comprehensive history to be published on the German-American press appeared before Bergquist's study in 1957. *The German Language Press in America* by Carl Wittke provided a complete history of the German-language press in America from the colonial period up to the post-World War II period. Like historians of the immigrant and ethnic press,

³¹ Bergquist, "German-American Press," 131.

Wittke emphasized how the German-language press served to help immigrants both ease into their new American life and stay connected to their old one. Rather than taking a bibliographic approach or pursuing the histories of individual publications, Wittke's aim was to demonstrate the role of the German-language press in the history of German Americans and in the social, political, and economic history of the U.S.³²

Although Wittke does not focus on women's publications specifically, he contends that the German-language press was an important tool that allowed many German Americans to maintain transatlantic connections to their German heritage and homeland. My focus on the German-American press as a commonly used medium for preserving ties to German culture and heritage during World War I, therefore, builds on the work of Wittke and challenges Bergquist's assertion that the German-American press concerned itself only marginally with issues involving Germany.

German-American Women's Press

While very few scholars have concentrated exclusively on the German-American women's press, a few solid studies exist. The work of Monika Blaschke on the mainstream German-American and women's press leads the research in this field. In addition, she is one of the only scholars to have examined *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* as a historical source.

Some of the first literature published by Blaschke on the topic of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* appeared in 1990 in the book, *Frauen Wandern Aus: Deutsche Migrantinnen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Women Are Emigrating Out: German Female Migrants in the 19th and 20th Century), edited by Blaschke and Christiane Harzig. In this study, Blaschke argued that in general, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* was helpful to German-American women because it clearly

³² Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, 1-8.

outlined the ideal German housewife for its readers: in addition to reproductive responsibilities, she should maintain and preserve German traditions especially as they related to family life, language, religion, and relationships with the old country. In this sense, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* helped German-American women feel less isolated and gave them a sense of identity by relating to the topics of housework and family life. Similar to arguments made by historians of the immigrant and mainstream German-American press, Blaschke maintained that the women's press helped readers bridge the old world with the new and allow easier incorporation into American society.³³ In a subsequent chapter published five years later, Blaschke argued that ethnic women's newspapers "attempted to speak to the traditional immigrant housewife as well as the American woman." In doing so, she argued, women's newspapers projected two different versions of womanhood - traditional female roles tied to Germanness on the one hand and progressive action and education for women coded as American on the other.³⁴

Later in 1997, Blaschke published the book, *Die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums: Presse für deutsche Einwanderinnen in den USA 1890-1914* (The Discovery of the Female Audience: Press for German Female Immigrants in the USA 1890-1914). In this comprehensive work, Blaschke examined the changing lifestyle of German women in the U.S. around the turn of the century and related it to the German-language women's press. As in her earlier works, Blaschke argued that at the forefront of the German-American female experience during this time was a merging of two worlds - a traditional one that emphasized family and a less traditional one that reflected women's growing role in consumer culture and American society. Additionally, she noted how the mainstream German-language press began to model itself after

³³ Monika Blaschke, "Die deutschamerikanische Presse für Frauen: Bestand, Prognosen und Probleme," in *Frauen Wandern Aus: Deutsche Migrantinnen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Monika Blaschke and Christiane Harzig (Bremen: Labor Migration Project and the University of Bremen, 1990), 107-108.

³⁴ Monika Blaschke, "Communicating the Old and the New," 320.

the American press during this time by becoming more commercialized. One of the publications she analyzed for the book was *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* magazine. In dedicating a whole chapter to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, Blaschke detailed the background and progression of the publication from its beginning in 1904 to the beginning of World War I in 1914. Specifically, she argued that it was very successful during this time because it attracted a wide audience, overcame regional borders, and appealed to both urban and rural women. Also leading to its success was its concentration on the perspective of women and their interests and concerns.

Of particular interest for this thesis is Blaschke's focus on the magazine's letters to the editor section. She noted how this section helped German-American women adjust to American life by giving them a forum to ask questions. While Blaschke's study on *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* focused mostly on the pre-war years, she did refer to the war years briefly in an effort to demonstrate a fundamental shift in the magazine's style and content that occurred in 1914. She argued that the personality of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* changed dramatically during the war years as it molded itself more to the concerns of Germany and less to the modern woman. Blaschke outlined ways in which the content of the magazine shifted during the war years from its moderate, conciliatory tone to a more militaristic, nationalistic, politicized one. This shift applied to nearly all sections of the magazine: news, short stories and poems, editorials, pictures, subscription renewal gifts for readers, and other regular columns. Furthermore, she suggested that the articles about the roles of women during the war showed an inconsistent image; while certain articles highlighted the service of women for the Fatherland in the U.S. and in Germany, other aspects of the magazine showed a conservative view of women that did not necessarily encourage women to enter the public sphere and undertake questions of politics. Ultimately, for Blaschke, this war time shift in the coverage and content of the magazine reflected the opinions

and decisions of the male editor and publisher, H. H. Coleman, and not the female editors or readers. For her, the war years of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* signified a loss of the earlier progressive spirit that had characterized the magazine and a shift towards a more conservative, family-centric tone.³⁵

My research and analysis of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* builds on Blaschke's study of the magazine in many respects, but also challenges some points. As Blaschke also contends, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* gave German-American women the ability to connect with other German-American women around the country and even in Germany as they exemplified both traditional and non-traditional roles of womanhood. By submitting letters to the editor, they enjoyed a new platform for connecting to their German heritage and expressing nationalism that reached beyond their immediate immigrant communities. However, whereas Blaschke highlights the importance of such letters in the earlier years of the magazine prior to the war, her discussion of the war-time shift in the magazine's style overlooks their significance. According to Blaschke, the nationalistic and political shift in the content of the magazine during World War I likely reflected only the views of the male publisher. However, as the next chapters demonstrate, it was also indeed the female readers themselves who expressed such pro-German views through their letters to the editors. This thesis builds on Blaschke's observations of the nationalistic turn of the magazine, but extends beyond it by placing particular emphasis on the rhetoric put forth in the letters from readers. As the next chapter explores, many German-American female readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* supported the nationalistic and political turn that the magazine experienced and expressed their approval openly in their letters. Therefore, in addition to

³⁵ Monika Blaschke, *Die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums: Presse für deutsche Einwanderinnen in den USA 1890-1914* (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 1997).

analyzing how *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* conveyed its support for Germany, this study also aims to bring to light the views of German-American female readers in regard to their old “homeland.”

Immigrant and German-American Women

As part of the larger historiographical turn in the latter decades of the twentieth century towards topics of social history and the history of minorities, the study of immigrant and ethnic women in the U.S. witnessed considerable growth. In separating the history of immigrant and ethnic women from the broader study of immigrant and ethnic groups in the U.S., contemporary historians have sought to explore the experiences of ethnic and immigrant women as their own distinct group, rather than viewing them as passive bystanders in the traditional male dominated narrative. This thesis builds on this framework by exploring German-American female readers’ reactions to World War I through their letters.

One of the first historians to study immigrant and ethnic women was Maxine Seller. Her article, “Beyond the Stereotype: A New Look at the Immigrant Woman, 1880-1924,” published in 1975, pointed out how stereotypes about immigrant women had influenced the work of historians. Specifically, she argued that immigrant women had been studied only in relation to their domestic roles and rarely in relation to their involvement in activities outside of the home. Seller contended that many women did indeed step out of the traditional domestic sphere and made various contributions to their ethnic communities, such as participating in community politics and creating local organizations and social groups. She advocated for more research on immigrant women and specifically mentioned that letters to the editor columns in the ethnic press should be further examined as a source.³⁶ This thesis builds on the work of Seller and other

³⁶ Maxine Seller, “Beyond the Stereotype: A New Look at the Immigrant Woman, 1880-1924,” *Journal of Ethnic History* 1, no. 3 (1975): 59-70. See also Maxine Seller, ed. *Immigrant Women* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

immigration historians by showing that German-American women had opinions about the war, politics, and their communities and expressed them openly in the press.

Since Seller, historians of immigration have experimented with new approaches and frameworks for studying immigrant and ethnic women. In 2006, Donna Gabaccia and Vicki Ruiz detailed how transnational approaches had changed the field of immigrant women's history, but they also brought to the forefront four themes which they argued have best exemplified more recent studies of immigrant women in the U.S. – making home, community building, memory, and citizenship.³⁷ They assert that women engaged in community building by linking “private and public worlds.”³⁸ In addressing how readers in their letters to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* participated in the politics affecting their immigrant communities, I expand on their argument to show that German-American women's activism in the press also bridged their “private and public worlds.”³⁹

Literature on German-American women has also examined what role these women played in their larger immigrant communities. Some historians, like Christiane Harzig in her work on German-American women in Chicago around the turn-of-the-twentieth century, have focused on the role German-American women played in forming and maintaining relationships within and to their larger communities.⁴⁰ Other historians like Linda Schelbitzki Pickle and Birte Pflieger have looked at German-American women in their communities and their role in preserving culture, language, and identity. In her work, *Contented Among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth-century Midwest*, Pickle argued

³⁷ Donna Gabaccia and Vicki Ruiz, "Migrations and Destinations: Reflections on the Histories of U.S. Immigrant Women," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 26, no. 1 (2006): 3-19.

³⁸ Gabaccia and Ruiz, "Migrations and Destinations," 8.

³⁹ Gabaccia and Ruiz, "Migrations and Destinations," 8.

⁴⁰ Christiane Harzig, *Familie, Arbeit und weibliche Öffentlichkeit in einer Einwanderungsstadt: Deutschamerikanerinnen in Chicago um die Jahrhundertwende* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae, 1991).

that women acted as the “conservators of culture and language” and therefore helped to maintain and recreate a sense of Old World comforts for their families and communities in the new homeland. She extended this argument to include German-speaking women who had not settled with a close family group and argues that they compensated by constructing female communities among their neighbors in order to support one another and share in Old World customs and practices. Furthermore, she contends that the German-American press realized women’s roles in preserving culture and further encouraged them to maintain their connections to their German heritage.⁴¹ Similarly, in her examination of the women’s auxiliary group of the German Society of Pennsylvania, Pflieger builds on women’s role of “preserving ethnic identity” and maintains that they did so through the organization of women’s clubs. She further argues that the events and activities they coordinated together as a group, which during the early years of World War I included various relief efforts for German soldiers and civilians, constituted a separation from their domestic roles and challenged traditional gender norms.⁴² Other historians who have studied German-American women have also pointed to such community groups as platforms which allowed women to move beyond traditional gender roles and establish themselves in their communities, sometimes while also preserving and advocating for their German culture.⁴³

This thesis follows the work of Harzig, Pickle, and Pflieger who illustrated the unique role German-American women played in preserving ties to their native culture and language. While Pickle focused on the ways German-American women in the nineteenth century promoted

⁴¹ Linda Schelbitzki Pickle, *Contented Among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 85, 108, 110, 129, 187.

⁴² Birte Pflieger, “Charity Before Government Welfare: Women and the German Society of Pennsylvania” in *Ethnicity Matters: A History of the German Society of Pennsylvania* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 2006), 59, 61, 74.

⁴³ See Annette R. Hofmann, “Lady Turners in the United States: German-American Identity, Gender Concerns, and Turnerism,” *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 383-404; Anke Ortlepp, “German-American Women’s Clubs – Constructing Women’s Roles and Ethnic Identity,” *American Studies* 48, no. 3 (2003): 425-442; and Katja Rampelmann, “Infidels, Ethnicity, and Womanhood: Women in the German-American Freethinker Movement,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 39 (2004): 61-76.

cultural preservation, I extend her argument to include the early twentieth century. Specifically, I suggest that the propensity of German-American women to preserve elements of their "Germanness" continued beyond the nineteenth century through the years leading up to World War I and only strengthened and intensified upon the start of the war. This thesis further builds on the work of Pflieger and other historians who have studied German-American women's groups and how they served as preservationists of culture and heritage and outlets for activism outside of the home. I extend their argument to the readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* as an example of a social group and the sense of community formed through their letters to the magazine.

German Americans during World War I and German-American Identity

The study of German Americans during World War I has become a specialized interest of many historians due to the volatility of the time period for the German element in the U.S. Perhaps the earliest historian to approach this topic was Carl Wittke, who published *German-Americans and the World War* in 1936.⁴⁴ In this book, Wittke chronicles the events of the war and the response of German-America with a particular focus on the German-language newspapers of Ohio during that time.

The most preeminent scholarly work on the topic, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I*, was published in 1974 by Frederick C. Luebke. In this study, Luebke aims to explain the reasons anti-German rhetoric and behavior became so pronounced during World War I. He contends that "latent tensions" existed between Americans and German Americans prior to the war, which was the result of growing suspicions and distrust by Americans towards Kaiser Wilhelm II and Imperial Germany that began in the late 1800s. For Luebke, it was not the war

⁴⁴ Carl Wittke, *German Americans and the World War* (Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1936).

itself that caused the anti-German hysteria that swept the country, but rather the war allowed underlying tensions to rise to the surface in the form of hostility. He also goes into detail about the diversity of the large German ethnic group in the U.S. and how the experiences of various groups of German Americans, from the pro-German “cultural chauvinists” to the more neutral religious groups, differed greatly in how they publicly responded to the war and how they were treated by the American public, with the latter ironically being the least outspoken and political, but enduring the most persecution. Furthermore, he adds that a common stereotype of German Americans based only on the loudest and proudest pro-Germany voices in the press, wrongly assumed that all citizens of German origin unanimously supported Germany in the war and thus fueled the anti-German movement.⁴⁵

Much of the historiography surrounding German Americans during World War I revolves around the degree to which Americans of German descent identified with their German heritage and ethnicity. While historians generally agree that the number of Americans self-identifying with their German heritage radically decreased between the latter part of the nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century, they disagree on the timing and cause of that shift. Scholars have often used World War I as a benchmark in the study of German-American identity, although in different ways.

One theory is that the anti-German hysteria and nativism during World War I forced those with ties to Germany to give up their connections and assimilate fully into mainstream American culture due to the fear of persecution. In *Bonds of Loyalty*, Luebke argues that indeed it was the nativism, hostility, and intolerance during World War I which led many German

⁴⁵ Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), xiii - xvi, 27-28, 77-78, 88-89, 328.

Americans to abandon their hyphenated identity.⁴⁶ Even recent pieces in magazines, radio, and television, such as “The Economist,” NPR, and the PBS documentary, “The Great War,” have examined how the anti-German hysteria of World War I caused many German Americans to downplay their German roots and merge into mainstream Anglo-America.⁴⁷

On the opposite side of the debate, other historians like Wittke have argued that many German Americans’ ties to their German heritage only strengthened when their homeland, language, ethnicity, and sense of community came under attack during World War I.⁴⁸ In this sense, that Germany and the German people were being disparaged in the English-language papers outraged those German Americans with ties to the old Fatherland and ignited a pro-German countermovement. However, Wittke is careful to point out that not all German Americans agreed with the pro-German stance of the German-language press and that there were likely many Americans of German heritage who did not even read the German-American newspapers.⁴⁹

Still others have argued that German Americans as a formidable ethnic group had already begun to fade several years before World War I. In his work on Philadelphia Germans, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity*, Russell A. Kazal argues that German-American identity was starting to diminish before World War I and that the war only accelerated the inevitable. He points to a “crisis of assimilation” that had been eroding German-American identity since the turn-of-the-twentieth century due to the diminished number of German immigrants entering the U.S. and second-generation German Americans drifting from

⁴⁶ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 329.

⁴⁷ See “The Silent Minority,” *The Economist*, February 7, 2015, under “America’s Largest Ethnic Group Has Assimilated So Well That People Barely Notice It,” <https://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21642222-americas-largest-ethnic-group-has-assimilated-so-well-people-barely-notice-it> (accessed February 11, 2015); *All Things Considered*, “During World War I, U.S. Government Propaganda Erased German Culture,” NPR, April 7, 2017; *American Experience*, “The Great War,” PBS, April 10-12, 2017.

⁴⁸ Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War*, 22.

⁴⁹ Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War*, xi.

the culture of their parents. However, he points out that this shift away from German identity often only pertained to German-American men, as German-American women appeared to be filling the void left by men and becoming increasingly active in the German-American public sphere.⁵⁰ However, for Kazal, the more important topic regarding the waning of German-American identity is what kind of identities took over in its place. He maintains that even before the war, German Americans had begun to gradually redefine and realign themselves through other identities such as class, religion, and gender, rather than their German ethnicity.⁵¹ Like Kazal, in his book *Translating America: An Ethnic Press and Popular Culture, 1890-1920*, Peter Conolly-Smith also argues that the decline of German-Americanism was already underway prior to the war as the result of “a decades-long process of cultural negotiation and accommodation” and that the war merely hastened its dissolution. For Conolly-Smith, also contributing to the end of German-American identity were the negative visual stereotypes of Germans portrayed in war time propaganda posters, because they encouraged Americans of German heritage to renounce their ethnic identity.⁵²

As the historiography on this subject suggests, some historians have argued that the forces of Americanization had already begun to take their toll on German-American identity in the decades leading up to World War I, while others contend that ties to their old homeland were still very much active and that it was the events of World War I themselves and the resulting anti-German hysteria that led to a decrease in the German presence in the U.S. This analysis participates in this historiographical debate by building on the latter philosophy. In particular,

⁵⁰ In her work on the Women’s Auxiliary Group of the German Society of Pennsylvania (GSP), Birte Pflieger also points out that membership in the auxiliary group grew during the early years of the war in stark contrast to the male only GSP. See Pflieger, “Charity Before Government Welfare: Women and the German Society of Pennsylvania,” 61-62.

⁵¹ Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 6, 8-9.

⁵² Conolly-Smith, *Translating America*, 9-10, 14.

this thesis follows the work of Wittke in arguing that German-American identity at the onset of the war existed with considerable vitality and likely gradually declined as a result of the legislative and social hardships placed on all things German during the war. As the letters in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* reveal, the pro-German sentiment expressed by readers during the early years of the war signify that their German identity had not suffered as severely as suggested by historians like Conolly-Smith and Kazal. However, I build on Kazal's observation that German identity was particularly strong among German-American women, as evidenced by the letters to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. This is due, perhaps, to the fact that World War I and the resulting anti-German hysteria threatened the concept of German heritage and this particularly affected women because they were the ones expected to maintain connections to their families' culture and heritage. While I do not aim to generalize the feelings and opinions of German-American women as a collective group based on the letters published in one magazine, the sentiments expressed in those letters are worthy of further analysis and reveal how many German-American women felt about their German heritage.⁵³

One of the larger research goals of this analysis has been to intertwine the work of scholars and historians interested in the German-American press, German-American women, and the significance of World War I on German Americans. Such a study on the pro-German rhetoric expressed by German-American women in their press during World War I requires that these fields combine and overlap in new ways. For example, while historians have investigated nationalism in the German-American mainstream and radical press during the period of World

⁵³ By 'German American' I refer to both those who considered themselves Americans, but identified with their German heritage and those who were directly from Germany, but who were physically living in America. Such a definition therefore includes both first- and second-generation German immigrants. As historians have shown, transnational connections were felt and cultivated by both groups. Furthermore, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* reached out to both groups and, as the letters show, both first- and second-generation German immigrants wrote letters to the editor and expressed similar attitudes toward Germany during the war.

War I, the German-American women's press during this time has been largely understudied. Conversely, while a few historians have examined the German-American women's press in general, the period of World War I deserves more attention. Furthermore, other studies have examined the actions of German-American women during World War I and their efforts to preserve and maintain culture, but again, their use of the press has often been overlooked. This thesis therefore incorporates the study of the German-American press, German-American women, World War I, and German-American identity and relates them collectively to the rhetoric expressed by readers in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. Ultimately, I contend that through their use of the press to express themselves during the early years of World War I, German-American women strengthened their role as active members of their local and transnational communities, merged their private and public spheres, and reinforced ties to their German cultural and political identity.

SOURCES, METHODOLOGY, AND SCOPE

The principal source of this analysis is *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. The publication first began around the turn-of-the-twentieth century as part of *Der Herold*, one of the two major German-language mainstream daily newspapers published in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. To reach a wider audience, *Der Herold* often sent its subscribers supplemental papers such as *Acker und Gartenbau Zeitung* (for farmers). This monthly supplement first appeared in 1870 for subscribers of *Der Herold* and by the 1890s a section of women's pages called "Die Hausfrau" was added. By 1904 it expanded into its own monthly publication, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, and was published by Hausfrau Publishing Company.⁵⁴ The first issue appeared in September 1904 and

⁵⁴ Carl Heinz Knoche, *The German Immigrant Press in Milwaukee* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 124, 128-129. See also Blaschke, *Die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums*, 223-225.

proclaimed its hope to lead the German women of America.⁵⁵ The official editor of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* was a German-American man named Henry Harrison Coleman, but two German-American women, Liesel Haller and Marie Jüssen Monroe, undertook most of the practical work.⁵⁶

The female perspective in the editorial influence as well as in the targeted audience is certainly evident in the content and layout of the magazine. By 1914 issues regularly consisted of 50-52 pages of material. Each issue included several literary pieces such as poems, short stories, and serials, many of which were written by women. Regular editorial sections such as “Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen” (A Chat with our Readers) and “Briefkasten der Redaktion” (Editor’s Mailbox) were often written by the female editors. Articles about cooking, sewing and fashion, and child rearing appeared every month as well and were also coordinated by them.⁵⁷ Other sections such as “Haus und Herd” (Home and Hearth), “Erbetene Rezepte” (Requested Recipes), “Wer sucht Verwandte und Bekannte” (Who is Looking for Relatives and Friends), “Offener Sprechsaal” (Open Speaking Forum), and “Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise” (Voices from the Readership) allowed readers the opportunity to write in and have their questions, thoughts, and tips for other women published. Advertisements for health & beauty and household products also filled the pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. Stylistically, the magazine was printed in Old German fraktur type font and the covers were usually illustrated in color. Issues were published on the 25th of every month, presumably in the month prior to the issue date. For that reason, news coverage of major events was often delayed by a month.

⁵⁵ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1904, 2-3.

⁵⁶ Blaschke, “Die deutschamerikanische Presse für Frauen: Bestand, Prognosen und Probleme,” 107.

⁵⁷ Blaschke, *Die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums*, 331-333. See also *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1917, 50; In a response to a reader’s question, a letter in the “Briefkasten der Redaktion” section of the April 1917 issue also explains to readers that the editorial team is made up of men and women, but that everything to do with women, children, household, fashion, hand stitching, cooking, etc. is completed by the female editors.

Since its inception and even during World War I, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* enjoyed relatively high circulation numbers. After debuting in 1904, its readership base totaled 150,000 by 1905. Circulation remained steady in the 100,000+ range until the events of World War I and the anti-German hysteria took its toll on the German-language press in the U.S. Even then, it was still able to maintain 50,000+ subscriptions.⁵⁸ While it reached readers all over the country, the majority of its subscriptions were held in the states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Texas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and New York, areas of substantial German immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵⁹ When the magazine first started in 1904, an annual subscription cost just twenty-five cents per year. By 1914, the cost had risen to \$1.00 per year or ten cents per issue.

Die Deutsche Hausfrau remains one of the most successful German-American publications of the twentieth century. This is due not only to its high circulation numbers over the years, but also to its longevity, since it is still in publication today. In 1954, the magazine was sold and moved to Chicago and then in the early 1980s it was moved again to Athens, Georgia, where it is published today as *Das Fenster* (The Window).⁶⁰ Although its target audience is no longer strictly female, it still continues to promote ties to Germany, German culture, and the German language in the U.S.⁶¹

Die Deutsche Hausfrau is an ideal medium for this study on German-American women's expressions of pro-German support in the press during World War I for many reasons. First, it was one of the only German-language publications designed specifically for a female audience that also had a national distribution footprint. As previously noted, women's pages existed in some of the German-language newspapers in the bigger cities during this time, but they did not

⁵⁸ Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals, 1732-1955: History and Bibliography* (West Germany: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1965), 676.

⁵⁹ Blaschke, "Communicating the Old and New," 318.

⁶⁰ Blaschke, "Die deutschamerikanische Presse für Frauen: Bestand, Prognosen und Probleme," 106.

⁶¹ See the website for *Das Fenster*, <http://www.dasfenster.com>.

often reach the less populated areas. Moreover, these women's sections of the newspapers often only consisted of a few pages and were therefore limited in space. In contrast, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* reached thousands of subscribers around the country and each issue provided over fifty pages of material intended just for women. When examining the sentiments of German-American women in the press, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* is therefore able to represent a larger population of women. Furthermore, the magazine held a high reputation and was incredibly popular among German-American women. It is evident from their letters how beloved the magazine was and how much they treasured it. Countless letters printed in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* attest to its value within the German-American female community.

Also notable is *Die Deutsche Hausfrau's* continued existence during the war years. Considering the legislative hardship placed on German-language publications during the war, that fact that *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* not only survived, but also enjoyed such relatively high readership levels, makes it an invaluable resource for examining the war's influence on German Americans.

Finally, such letters themselves make *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* a unique source for studying the opinions of German-American women during World War I. That the magazine encouraged readers to write in and that they published hundreds of readers' letters sets it apart from other German-language newspapers that did not incorporate communication with readers. Indeed, other historians have highlighted the historical value of letters to the editor in the immigrant and foreign-language press for creating a public sphere where editors and readers could openly communicate.⁶² Nearly every monthly issue of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* during the early years of the war prior to American involvement included a section titled "Stimmen aus dem

⁶² Anna D Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *Letters from Readers in the Polish American Press, 1902-1969: A Corner for Everybody* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 4.

Leserkreise.” Occasionally, a section titled “Offener Sprechsaal” was also included. The letters published from readers in these two sections are the main source material for this analysis, with the former being the most prevalent. Another section of the magazine titled “Briefkasten der Redaktion,” also appeared in nearly every monthly issue, and offered indirect insight into readers’ thoughts about Germany. In this section, the female editors replied to individual readers’ letters and addressed them by name and home state. The editors’ responses reveal that the viewpoints and thoughts of these readers aligned with the pro-German themes in other readers’ letters that were printed in “Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise” and “Offener Sprechsaal.”

Furthermore, as this section was usually several pages in length and longer than the two sections of published letters, the number of editor responses suggests that there were far more letters sent in by readers to the magazine than could be published in the other two sections. Although they offer only an indirect second-person perspective on readers’ thoughts, I include examples of editor responses to readers in the “Briefkasten der Redaktion” section where possible to further illustrate the views of the female readership on the topics of the war, politics, heritage, language, culture, and homeland.

It must be noted, however, that there are inherent drawbacks to using letters from the press in terms of historical reliability. Unfortunately, as the letters in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* were written and published around one hundred years ago, and as those original letters no longer exist for historians to access, one cannot say with certainty that the letters were indeed written by German-American female readers from around the country and submitted to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* as is suggested in the magazine. In addition, as most of the letters published in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* echoed the magazine’s pro-German views, there is no way to know if all of the letters they received from readers inherently agreed with the magazine or if the editors chose

to overlook other dissenting letters and only publish those that matched their beliefs. Indeed, it could be argued that the shift in the tone of readers' letters to a more nationalistic view about Germany and Germans after the start of World War I in Europe was intentional and calculated, occurring right as the magazine was undergoing its own editorial shift towards a more overt, pro-German, nationalistic stance. This possibility suggests that the editors only published letters that supported the agenda of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and the larger German-American mainstream press which was widely known for its support of Germany and desire to galvanize German Americans to Germany's defense. Unfortunately, these limitations of readers' letters are regrettable, yet unavoidable realities for historians who study letters to the editor, as historians of the ethnic press like Anna D Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann have acknowledged.⁶³ While we cannot be absolutely positive that these letters were not fabricated or specifically chosen for their content by the editorial staff, this analysis presumes the letters were published legitimately and that the names and towns of the German-American women included with each letter are accurate and honest.

However, while it must be acknowledged that readers' letters published in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* during the early years of the war represent the views of only a fraction of the most staunch German Americans, the strong opinions in the letters do allow some insight in to the type of reader *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* attracted. By employing nationalistic rhetoric that romanticized the notion of the Fatherland, the Kaiser, and a traditional German-speaking household, for example, one can surmise that the readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* were likely conservative, literate, middle-class women who were perhaps more connected to their German roots than other groups of German-American women.

⁶³ Anna D Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, "As if at a Public Meeting: Polish American Readers, Writers, and Editors of *Ameryka-Echo*, 1922-1969," in *Letters Across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants*, ed. Bruce S. Elliott, David A. Gerber, and Suzanne Sinke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 200-220.

Scope

The temporal focus of the next two chapters on German-American women's pro-German expressions in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* is the period of American neutrality - from the start of the war in Europe in the summer of 1914 to the U.S. entry in the war in April 1917. The scope is limited to these first three years of the war due to the legislation that was implemented after the U.S. entered the war, which ultimately affected the editorial freedom of the foreign-language press. Following the Espionage and Trading with the Enemy Acts in 1917, the German-language press, including *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, was forced to omit any content that could be perceived as pro-German. To stay in circulation, German-American publications like *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* had to convey that they were indeed pro-Ally and supportive of the U.S. As a result, the issues of the magazine from early 1917 through the end of the war became decidedly patriotic towards the U.S. and set a limitation for this study by making it difficult to examine expressions of pro-German support during that time. Therefore, Chapters 2 and 3 focus almost exclusively on issues published between the summer of 1914 and the spring of 1917 in order to highlight the expressions of pro-German support. However, I do bring in some discussion and analysis of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* before that time in an effort to contextualize the nationalism that epitomized that era; the pre-war issues between January and July 1914 provided a point of reference for noting the nationalistic turn in the contents and coverage of the magazine after war broke out. Similarly, an exploration of the late-war issues from April 1917 until the end of the war in late 1918 supplied a point of reference for the end of the pro-German nationalistic mood of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and its evolution to a pro-American one. Therefore, Chapter 4 concludes with an examination of these late-war issues to further analyze how the changes to editorial freedom affected the magazine and its readers. Ultimately, these issues reveal that

readers' connections to their sense of Germanness and German identity as well as their transnational ties to Germans and Germany were forfeited due to the legislative restrictions placed on the press. However, these aspects of the magazine were replaced by increased attention given to the role of women in society and their contributions to their communities. For their part, readers continued to express their appreciation for the magazine and its role as a medium just for them, mirroring the increasingly public and progressive role of women in a changing U.S. society.

CHAPTER 2

“THE GERMAN WOMAN WILL BE THE ACTUAL VICTOR”: EMBRACING POLITICS AND WAR

INTRODUCTION

With my whole heart, I wish you the strength to continue your work, because I believe, like so many thousands of your dear readers, that this magazine is truly valuable. In these hard times, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* brings comfort and hope to us scared Germans. The articles about the war are perfect for a busy woman to read. *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* makes sure all of us women are kept up to date on current affairs.¹

- Frau Martha B., Minnesota, June 1916

Just before World War I began in Europe in the summer of 1914, across the ocean in the U.S., *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* was nearing its tenth anniversary and enjoying its success as a popular German-American women’s journal. Having reached a national circulation of as many as 150,000 subscribers within its first ten years, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* had become an admired resource among German-American women.² As other historians have noted, one of the reasons the magazine was so successful was its ability to appeal to readers’ German and American interests simultaneously; while it helped German-speaking women adjust to their new homeland by providing them a connection to the American way of life, it also upheld their connections to their old homeland.³ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* was therefore able to serve as the liaison that skillfully combined both German and American influences and reinforced the coexistence of a German-American identity.⁴

¹ Martha B., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, June 1916, 46.

² Blaschke, *Die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums*, 217; Arndt and Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals, 1732-1955*, 676. In their book, Arndt and Olson list the circulation of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* at as high as 150,000 during its first ten years.

³ Blaschke, “Communicating the Old and the New,” 318; Blaschke and Harzig, *Frauen Wandern Aus*, 107-108.

⁴ Blaschke, *Die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums*, 248.

However, when much of Europe moved towards war in late summer 1914 with Germany and Austria-Hungary at the center of it, the content of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* shifted away from this balanced tone and took on a decidedly nationalistic one in support of Germany with a heavy focus on the war.⁵ In the August 1914 issue of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, which went to print after the June 28 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, signs of the magazine's fervent support for Germany were already discernible.⁶ By the October 1914 issue, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* had become more politicized and was filled with articles related to the war. As the war progressed beyond 1914, the magazine increasingly focused on the war and politics throughout its various segments and sections.⁷

Nevertheless, as the letters from readers like Minnesota-based Frau Martha B. confirm, many of them welcomed this boost in pro-German war coverage and praised the magazine for its content. Moreover, female readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also expressed support for Germany themselves with comparable militarized and nationalistic rhetoric on the topics of politics and war. This points to the growing involvement of German-American women in their communities, the strength of their German political identity, and the ease with which they used the press to step out of the domestic sphere and into a more public one. Their strong sentiments of support for Germany and the use of the press to express themselves reveal that they were active members of their local and trans-Atlantic German communities and readily engaged in topics affecting them, such as the war and politics. By engaging in such topics typically associated with men and outside the realm of more traditional female concerns of hearth and

⁵ Blaschke, *Die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums*, 288.

⁶ The news report on the murder of Archduke Ferdinand in the monthly segment "Illustrated Chronicle of the Times" of the August 1914 issue predicts disastrous consequences for the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and for all of Europe, and details the actions of Kaiser Wilhelm II and his support for the neighboring German ally, 14-15.

⁷ This section builds on the observations also pointed out by Blaschke in *Die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums* that certain sections of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* became particularly nationalistic, 289-301.

home, female readers politicized themselves, the magazine, and the domestic sphere, blending their private and public worlds. Furthermore, readers' praise for the nationalistic shift in the magazine after the start of the war and their use of similar rhetoric to express their own pro-Germany views bring to light the strength of readers' German identity. By responding so positively to the newfound exclusively pro-Germany message of the magazine, readers indicated that they were still connected to their Germanness politically and had not melded into American life as assuredly as some historians have suggested.⁸

NEWS ABOUT THE WAR AND GERMANY

One section of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* which became most noticeably consumed with the topics of war and politics was the news segment "Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit" (Illustrated Chronicle of the Times), which prided itself on delivering the truth about Germany and the war. At a time when many German Americans felt they were not getting all of the facts from the American media and its Allied connections, many sought out the German-language press for information about the war. Throughout the period of American neutrality, "Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit" consisted of detailed war reports from the various theaters, offering pro-German commentary about the reasons for the war and defending Germany's role in it. Statements that appeared in these reports denounced the British as liars and exalted the Germans as a righteous folk who would be victorious. For example, in December 1914, an article reported, "Despite the false reports that come out of London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, the Allies have been unsuccessful. The German army hasn't suffered a single loss worth mentioning ... so we can relax and be proud of the accomplishments of our fellow German countrymen and be assured

⁸ See Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*, 6, 8-9, and Conolly-Smith, *Translating America*, 9-10.

that they will bring to the Fatherland a shining victory.”⁹ In the “Briefkasten der Redaktion” section of the magazine, the female editors often reiterated *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*’s commitment to virtuous war reporting with responses to readers. In July 1915, for example, in response to Frau G. M. of California who had complemented the magazine’s coverage of the war, one of the editors wrote, “we are happy to hear that you have found our war reports to be true through your contacts in the Fatherland. We make every effort to ensure we only use confirmed, official news stories from the war theater to give our readers a true understanding of what is happening.”¹⁰

In response to the news and war coverage featured in the magazine, readers conveyed their appreciation in letters to the editor, especially for their reporting, which they believed to be accurate and trustworthy. Referred to as “a female reader from Alabama,” one woman wrote, “I am always excited when *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* arrives so that I can read how the war is actually going.”¹¹ Another reader, Frau Chas. B. of California, also wrote to the magazine, “the ‘Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit’ is so precious to us; we find there is so much intelligence in it that one would never get in the English newspapers.”¹² This distinction between the German-language press and the English-language press was often specifically noted by readers in their letters and indicate that readers viewed the magazine as a trusted source. Readers believed that, as part of the German-language press, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* was committed to reporting the truth about the war and Germany, as opposed to the English press. Frau G. of Missouri expressed this sentiment when she wrote in the August 1915 issue, “In these hard times for our dear Fatherland, it is right with me that *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* brings words of love from the old

⁹ Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 14-15.

¹⁰ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1915, 49. See also April 1915, 48.

¹¹ Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1917, 41.

¹² Chas. B., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1915, 47.

homeland. It does my heart well to read such passionate words defending the Fatherland compared to the disgraceful slander that appears in the English newspapers against Germany.”¹³ Frau J.H.M. of Nebraska explained that despite having been in the country for over fifteen years, the war coverage in the news section of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* was preferable to all other news sources: “We have been here sixteen years, my husband was also once a soldier in Germany, and we can’t wait every month to receive the paper to catch up on the latest news from the war. We receive daily German and English language newspapers, but we only believe what we read in the German newspaper because the English one is only lies.”¹⁴ Indeed, the availability of the German-language press was especially important to many readers during the early years of the war. As Frau Maria M. of Iowa wrote in May 1915, “We are happy that all German newspapers stand together unanimously for German justice. If we Germans didn’t have our dear German press here during this terrible time, how discouraged and disheartened we would feel.”¹⁵

The dishonesty of the English press commonly mentioned in the news reports of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also led some readers to be particularly defensive of the situation in Germany in their letters to the magazine. A few readers who lived in Germany wrote to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* to further decry the reliability of the English press and assure their fellow readers that Germany’s situation was not as dire as depicted by the Allies. In August 1915, the magazine published a letter by German Mutter Hoffmann in which she warned German women in the U.S. to distrust false reports depicting the German people as starving and oppressed:

You Germans over there must not worry that we are starving here. Everything is ok, we all just have to be more frugal... Everyone must be more frugal here. But we all do it for our beloved Kaiser and our beautiful Fatherland: Germany, Germany above all in the world!! Our men will not let a hunger emergency ever happen. Our beloved God will save our harvest... There is no unemployment here. The terrible enemies portray our

¹³ G., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1915, 42.

¹⁴ J. H. M., Aus Briefen von der alten Heimat, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 41.

¹⁵ Maria M., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 42.

Kaiser so badly as if he was a godless man... To close, I say to my German brothers and sisters in America, don't let yourselves be lied to, we are not starving and will not let that happen.¹⁶

Such letters from readers in Germany reveal the geographical expansiveness of the German community that *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* supported. The magazine helped produce and maintain a transatlantic community of women who identified as German and supported Germany during the war. Readers' collective distrust and disdain for the English press and preference for the German-language press helped to create a sense of community among readers – both locally in the U.S. as well as transnationally – that was built around shared values, interests, and support of Germany. In their work on immigrant women, Gabaccia and Ruiz pointed out how such interactions in the press enabled readers to step out of the domestic sphere and into an international and transnational world of politics and war.¹⁷ Thus, these exchanges helped to bridge readers' private and public worlds and create these transnational communities among immigrant women. Carl Wittke has also pointed out in his work on the German-American press, that it was indeed a tool used by German Americans to maintain transatlantic connections with other Germans.¹⁸ In addition to broadening readers' sense of community with other readers and extending their domestic sphere into the public, the collective perception that Germany was being attacked in the English papers likely reinforced readers' sense of German identity and further encouraged their support for their homeland. Triggered by the inflammatory remarks about Germany in the non-German press, female readers were suddenly faced with the choice to stand up for their ethnicity and homeland or ignore or even downplay their German roots. That many of them chose to praise the magazine for its coverage of the war and defense of Germany

¹⁶ Muttel Hoffmann, *Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1915, 42.

¹⁷ Gabaccia and Ruiz, "Migrations and Destinations," 8.

¹⁸ Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, 1-8.

in their responses to the magazine and also vehemently defend Germany themselves, sheds light on the connectedness they still felt to their German identity.

The photographs, images, and maps displayed in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also illustrate the focus on war and politics that dominated the overall content of the magazine during the early years of the war. Often included within the news section, these visual additions conveyed the political views of the magazine most conspicuously. Photographs of the German army at war were quite common and depicted a variety of scenes: German soldiers on the march, in the trenches, and at a church service.¹⁹ Pride in German military technology was also apparent in the pictures of German submarines, zeppelins, and its fleet.²⁰ Some photographs also suggested Germany's unspoken authority over their enemies. One particular photograph series from March 1916 showed a prisoner of war camp set up by the German army and specifically highlighted its large lookout tower and the French prisoners enjoying German food.²¹ The Kaiser and his family were also frequently shown, as the news often placed emphasis on him and his six sons.²² Whereas the cover of each monthly issue was usually a demure, chaste illustration of a child, woman, or a scene from nature, the October 1915 issue broke away from that pattern and instead used a large portrait of Crown Prince Wilhelm, the eldest son of Kaiser Wilhelm II, dressed in his military uniform.²³ Other large, full page portraits of the Kaiser appeared in the magazine as well.²⁴ The maps and other images that often accompanied the news section sought to explain the events of the war to the readers. Examples included maps showing the occupied areas of the

¹⁹ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1914, 5-8, 15; November 1914, 9, 15; May 1915, 29 ; June 1915, 15; March 1916,13; and April 1916, 12.

²⁰ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1916,12-13.

²¹ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1916, 12.

²² *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1914, 7.

²³ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1915, 1.

²⁴ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, June 1915, 3.

various war theaters and the activity of the German submarine boats.²⁵ In the October 1914 issue, as the first full news reports of the beginning of the war appeared, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* published a map of Europe that showed the war affiliation of each country and its military statistics.

Indeed, these militaristic images were a far cry from the images of household products, clothing, and other stereotypically female oriented images prevalent in the magazine before the war. Prior to October 1914, the images found in the magazine were mostly of picturesque German towns, landscapes, children, clothing, sewing patters, and household products. However, despite the break from such feminine, neutral images in favor of more martial and political ones, the latter were still quite popular and sentimental to readers. As Anna K. of Iowa mentioned in her letter to the editor, “I read your magazine during my leisure time and I don’t want to put it down especially in this sad time for the old Fatherland. The pictures awaken many memories for my husband and me of the old homeland.”²⁶

As part of their intense news coverage of the war, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also reported on relations among other European countries involved in the war as well as the role of the U.S. As early as the September 1914 issue, the reports in the “*Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit*” news section began to condemn England, France, and Russia for “trying to keep Germany suppressed for the past twenty years and curtail its development.” In addition, it also claimed that England was jealous of the German Empire because it had become powerful and prosperous.²⁷ Other war-themed articles directly faulted England for the war and implied that the war had been forced on

²⁵ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1915, 12; November 1915, 12; and February 1916, 12-14.

²⁶ Anna K., *Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise*, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1915, 46.

²⁷ *Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit*, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1914, 14.

Germany.²⁸ The role of the U.S. in the war in Europe was also frequently discussed and criticized in the magazine. The main criticism was the neutral stance the U.S. had taken in the war. As early as December 1914, the news reports included commentary on the neutrality of the U.S.: “It is odd to us that the U.S., who claims to be perpetually neutral and who supposedly wants to restore peace as soon as possible, sends munitions, clothes, weapons, horses, and automobiles, to our enemies in large amounts.”²⁹ By the February 1915 issue, this suspicion of non-neutrality had become full-fledged contempt. “The U.S. has always tried to act like they only want peace and they are neutral,” the article argued, “but the truth is the war is only able to go on because the U.S. continues to supply the Allies... If they were to stop, the war would be over within sixty days.”³⁰ In the news section, reports also began in February 1915 that groups of German Americans had formed with the sole mission of stopping the shipments of munitions and weapons to the Allies from the U.S.³¹ Stories of resistance trickled into other areas of the magazine as well. In a response to a letter from Frau Emilie B. of Ohio in the “Briefkasten der Redaktion” section, the editor replied “it shows your husband’s true love for the Fatherland that he gave up his secure job because it involved making munitions for Germany’s enemies, even though he knew how hard it would be to find another job. At least he is no longer earning blood money!”³²

In their own letters to the magazine, readers supported the magazine’s viewpoints and shared their own similar perspectives about international and domestic politics. Disdain for England and the so-called neutral stance of the U.S. were common subjects. In October 1915,

²⁸ Georg von Skal, “Das alte Vaterland in Waffen,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1914, 5 and Eugen Kühnemann, “Der Weltkrieg von 1914,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1914, 6.

²⁹ *Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit*, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 15.

³⁰ *Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit*, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1915, 15.

³¹ *Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit*, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1915, 15 and March 1915, 15.

³² Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1916, 48.

Frau F. E. Ch. of Idaho wrote: “Why don’t they write about the English atrocities and cruelties in the English newspapers? Of course not, because that would open their eyes about the war leadership in this country.”³³ L.C.K. of Ohio also expressed desperation and disappointment in the U.S. government: “How many tears, how much pain, sorrow, suffering, how many injured, how many orphans and widows has this terrible war already caused!?! And our government does nothing! Is there no more justice in this world?”³⁴

The inclusion of articles in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* on such topics and readers responses in their letters indicate that women’s interest in Germany and the war were not limited to superficial curiosities about the old homeland. Instead, readers’ awareness of politics went beyond a casual interest in Germany to include the more complex political mechanisms and underlying international intricacies fueling the war. Indeed, the magazine recognized readers’ interest in not only the politics and issues concerning Germany, but Germany’s enemies and allies as well. As a result, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* reported on and addressed topics for their female readership which did not promote merely domestic, traditional roles for German-American women, but rather politically engaged ones. Likewise, female readers’ participation in high stakes political topics like war munitions and their vocal criticism of the government especially at a time when women could not even vote yet, show women’s increased engagement in the public sphere and their sense of comfort with the politicization of their press. In this sense, as Maxine Seller has also noted in her work, immigrant women were active members of their ethnic communities and contributed by participating in the politics that affected them.³⁵

Moreover, exercising an active voice on topics such as their husband’s type of employment transcended their private world into the public, linking both worlds through the use of the press.

³³ F.E.Ch., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1915, 47.

³⁴ L.C.K., “Kriegsbilder aus dem Argonnen,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, June 1915, 50.

³⁵ Seller, “Beyond the Stereotype,” 59-70.

In addition to international relations and domestic politics, various segments of the *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* highlighted domestic social issues in the U.S., especially as they pertained to the increasingly harsh treatment of German Americans by the public and the government. The editors frequently responded to readers' letters in this section about the hostility they were experiencing from their neighbors because of their German ethnicity. In their responses, the editors advised readers to not discuss the war with such neighbors so that they did not upset themselves unnecessarily. To Frau Frieda M. of Kansas, they wrote in May 1915 "such people will never be convinced. Keep your head high and when Germany and Austria win – and we don't just hope that, we believe that – the naysayers will be convinced and realize the English papers were untrue all along."³⁶ A poem titled "To the Americans" by Georg von Skal appeared in the July 1915 issue and described the frustration and disappointment felt by many German Americans: "we came to this country and helped to build it up and now all you do is vilify us. We will not forget this."³⁷ Similarly, in the March 1916 issue, an entire article dedicated to the topic of President Wilson and German Americans admonished the President for his rhetoric about them:

for the first time a president of the U.S. has publicly and repeatedly in a hard tone come out against a specific group of the citizen population. Even though he didn't name German Americans it was clear who he meant... This whole smear campaign against the German Americans has a double purpose - for his reelection he's trying to paint himself as the savior of the country, as the only one who recognized the threat that German Americans presented for the country... The other reason is his love for England.³⁸

Perhaps the most controversial statements from the magazine on the treatment of the German-American community were published in the "Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen" section. This segment of the magazine, which appeared regularly in each monthly issue, was an

³⁶ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 50. See also February 1915, 50 and August 1915, 49.

³⁷ Georg von Skal, "Den Amerikanern," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1915, 3.

³⁸ Georg von Skal, "Der Präsident und die Deutsch-Amerikaner," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1916, 17-18.

open letter to readers from the editors regarding various topics. Sometimes this essay was a philosophical musing and other times it took the form of an impassioned manifesto. Regardless of style, during the early years of the war, the topic was almost always directly related to the war and its politics, or pride in some aspect of German heritage (as the next chapter investigates). In discussing the treatment of the German-American community, the editors, in a December 1915 edition, exclaimed:

In regard to our fellow citizens here, who attack us so fiercely and make such terrible accusations because we are better educated than them and therefore don't agree with them, they will have to come to us. If they insist that anyone who is a friend of the German people cannot be a good American, then they will eventually over time start to feel lonely and realize they were wrong... It doesn't help us to get deep in our anger, although we will never forget what they have done to us in the last year... Never has a German in this country raised their voice and demanded that people should help the Germans in their fight. We read every day in the newspapers how Americans think it is their duty to side against Germany. Thousands more who don't say that still think that Germany has to be defeated. Just because we didn't agree with them, just because we didn't want the U.S. to get involved, just because we were the few that wanted true neutrality, they treat us with such contempt.³⁹

In their letters to the magazine, readers also shared their frustrations with the way German Americans were treated, especially by the President. As one letter writer penned "although President Wilson demands from the 'hyphenated Americans' that they strip off everything from their old country as soon as they arrive here in this country, who he really means is everyone who isn't English!"⁴⁰

As the content of the magazine and responses from readers reveal, the attacks on German Americans directly affected readers. As a result, the German-American press became an increasingly important tool for women to express themselves and to share their collective experiences. Readers who were confronted with similar questions of identity, allegiance, and belonging increasingly utilized the press to connect with other German Americans. As so-called

³⁹ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1915, 15-16.

⁴⁰ L.C.K., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1916, 43.

“hyphenated Americans,” the singling out of their community by the President and other non-Germans in their larger communities reinforced the need for a safe space to express their thoughts with other like-minded readers. The pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and other German-American papers became a virtual community for readers and a medium to discuss politics and current affairs, especially as they directly related to them. Because of the growing anti-German sentiment in the U.S., the role of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and the sense of community that it created among readers became even more important. Indeed, as other historians have also pointed out, whereas the German-American press prior to World War I had historically been a space where German Americans could cultivate both their German and American identities, in the face of anti-German sentiment in the U.S., it became increasingly valuable for connecting primarily with and defending their sense of Germanness.⁴¹

SONGS, POEMS, AND SHORT STORIES

As the poem “To the Americans” suggests, another change to content and coverage during the first few years of the war involved the selections of songs, poems, and literary skits within *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. Before the start of the war in Europe, songs, poems, and short stories were often more family friendly and neutral – for example, they included classic waltzes, detective serials, and poems about nature. However, these selections became increasingly nationalistic and took on military undertones after the start of the war. Literary short stories about the war were pervasive and included themes like reunion, military mail, enemy territory, and husbands returning home from war.⁴² These literary pieces ranged in length and were authored mostly by women. In addition, quotes about war, sometimes by famous Germans, were

⁴¹ Blaschke, *die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums*, 288; Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, 1-8.

⁴² *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1915, 8-9, 11-12; October 1915, 15; and May 1916, 2.

often included.⁴³ Poems expressing support for Germany were also published in nearly every issue with titles like “Germany Soar Upwards,” “From Victory to Victory,” “For the Fatherland,” and “A Kaiser’s Word.”⁴⁴ In addition, readers regularly submitted nationalistic poems about the war that they had written themselves with titles like “The Best Cross” sent in by Frau W.B. of Illinois about the German Iron Cross and “To My Fatherland” by Frau Hattie M. of Minnesota about a German victory in the war.⁴⁵ Not only did readers embrace the politicization of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and express their own opinions of support for Germany in their regular letters to the magazine, but readers also felt strongly enough to craft their viewpoints in such expressive and creative ways. As an extension of their letters, these poems are another example of German-American women exercising their active voice in the politics affecting their community and showcasing their continued connections to their sense of German identity.

Song titles such as “Prayer during Battle,” “The Watch Guard on the Rhine,” “The Song of the Germany Navy,” “The New Hymn for the Fatherland,” “Greetings to the Homeland,” “The Good Comrade,” “Soldiers Departure,” and “German Words of Comfort” also demonstrate the martial tone of the magazine during the early war years.⁴⁶ The rhetoric within these songs, as the opening line of “The New Hymn for the Fatherland” demonstrates, conveyed messages of support for Germany and in this case, the Kaiser: “Hail to thee in the victor’s crown, master of the Fatherland. Hail to thee Emperor!”⁴⁷ Other songs, like “The Good Comrade,” depicted topics relevant to soldiers in battle: “I had a good comrade, a better one you could not find. The drums

⁴³ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 25; February 1915, 7, 13; June 1915, 24; July 1915, 9; and September 1915, 27.

⁴⁴ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, 5; June 1915, 2; September 1915, 15.

⁴⁵ W.B., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1916, 48 and Hattie M., Offener Sprechsaal, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1915, 46.

⁴⁶ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1914, 27; November 1914, 27; February 1915, 25, 29; May 1916, 27; August 1916, 27; September 1916, 27; and June 1915, 26.

⁴⁷ Hugo W. Kaun, “Neue Vaterlandshymne,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1915, 29.

beat for battle and he was at my side at every turn.”⁴⁸ Compared to the song titles that were included in the magazine prior to the war such as “The Traveling Singer,” “Schleswig-Holstein” (name of a German state), “Easter Hymn,” “The Wildflowers’ Young Green Leaves,” “My Little Sunshine,” and “Harvest Melody,” the wartime songs exemplify the degree to which war and military permeated all aspects of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*.⁴⁹

Letters from readers after the start of the war show how meaningful the new patriotic songs had become to German Americans young and old. A letter from Frau J.H.M. of Nebraska noted “every night my daughter sings the prayer for battle that appeared in your September issue and accompanies it with the piano. It is so comforting to us in the current times since the Fatherland is under such pain.”⁵⁰ Such letters reveal the extent to which the domestic sphere of readers was politicized, as the international topic of war went so far as to influence German-American women’s traditional roles as caregivers.

CONSUMING AND SAVING FOR THE HOMELAND

Die Deutsche Hausfrau also frequently featured advertisements for books, calendars, cross-stitch patterns, and other offerings. Some of these items were available for purchase, while others were advertised as free gifts readers could receive for renewing their subscription or referring a new subscriber. Like other segments of the magazine that became notably pro-German and politicized during the early years of the war, these items glorified Germany, its military, and its people in an unprecedented way. As early as the October 1914 issue, advertisements for the 1915 calendar began to appear with taglines such as “Germany, the future

⁴⁸ L. Uhland, “Der gute Kamerad,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1916, 27.

⁴⁹ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1914, 19; March 1914, 21; April 1914, 28; May 1914, 27; June 1914, 29; and July 1914, 25.

⁵⁰ J.H.M., Aus Briefen von der alten Heimat, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 41.

world power!” and “The Great War in Word and Picture.”⁵¹ In November 1915 and November 1916, in addition to summaries of recent war events and milestones, advertisements for the 1916 and 1917 calendars touted the inclusion of certain controversial political topics like “the ‘neutrality’ of the U.S.” and “German Americans in their adopted Fatherland,” respectively.⁵² Books such as *Meine alte Heimat nach 25 Jahren* (My Old Homeland After 25 Years) and *Als Deutschland Erwachte* (As Germany Awoke), about the rise of Germany and its uniqueness, were also available for purchase.⁵³ Collectible, decorative spoons etched with a picture of Kaiser Wilhelm II or Paul von Hindenburg were featured, as well as photographs of them along with embroidered wall frames that read “Unser Kaiser” (Our Emperor) and “Für’s Vaterland” (For the Fatherland).⁵⁴ Other embroidered products like decorative sofa pillows were perhaps the most prevalent item advertised. These pillows were available with phrases like “Stolz weht die Flagge, schwarz-weiß-rot!” (Proud waves the flag, black-white-red!), “Für’s Vaterland Alles” (Anything for the Fatherland), “Viel Feind, Viel Ehr” (The more danger, the more honor), “Deutschland, Deutschland Über Alles” (Germany, Germany above all else), “Einigkeit macht Stark” (Unity is strength), “Mit Gott für Kaiser und Reich” (With God for Emperor and Empire), “Hoch deutscher Aar, Hoch immerdar!” (High flies the German Eagle forever!).⁵⁵ These embroidered products, often produced by the magazine’s parent company, Hausfrau Publishing, also often included German military symbols such as the “Iron Cross” or the “Imperial Eagle” from the German Empire’s Coat of Arms. Purchasing patriotic goods like pillows and calendars brought the politics of war directly into readers’ intimate domestic spaces in ways that promoted a sense

⁵¹ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1914, 29.

⁵² *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1915, 3, and November 1916, 35.

⁵³ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1915, 3, and December 1914, VIII.

⁵⁴ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, 38; July 1915, 48; August 1915, 43; and December 1915, VIII.

⁵⁵ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1915, VIII; March 1916, 30; May 1916, 31; July 1916, 31; August 1916, 43; October 1916, 50; and November 1915, 37.

of Germany ethnicity among female consumers while demonstrating the porous boundaries between public and private spaces.

Readers responded very positively to the war-themed free gifts and items for purchase. In response to the 1915 calendar she received, Frau E.W. of Illinois expressed her happiness with its content. “The gorgeous calendar is so worthwhile that one wants to sit and read it because it is so extensive and includes so many beautiful pictures.”⁵⁶ Another reader, Frau Helene Sch. of Texas noted her excitement to receive the book about Germany’s rise to power. She wrote, “After being away from home for a while, upon my return, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the book *Als Deutschland erwachte* had arrived.”⁵⁷ Readers also expressed their fondness for the patriotic phrases used on the embroidered wall hangings and sofa pillows. In December 1915, Frau Elise K. of Indiana commented about the message on the pillow she had received, “they are the perfect words in these hard times.”⁵⁸ Another reader, Frau Frederique W. of Illinois praised the pillow she had won, “the inscription ‘High flies the German eagle’ is magnificent.”⁵⁹ To some readers, like Geo. B. of Illinois, such products were essential if one wanted to show their support for Germany: “Please send me item #410. I think the price is really reasonable. No one who feels so strongly for their old Fatherland in these hard times or feels so proud to be German should be without this to show the so-called standard Americans that in spite of any love for our new homeland, our adoration for our old homeland does not waver.”⁶⁰

As historians of the women’s press have noted, at the turn-of-the-twentieth century as advertising income became increasingly important to the media industry, publishers across the U.S. began to benefit from the consumer driven industrial society and the purchasing role that

⁵⁶ E.W., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1915, 46.

⁵⁷ Helene Sch., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1915, 42.

⁵⁸ Elise K., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1915, 47.

⁵⁹ Frederique W., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1916, 47.

⁶⁰ Geo. B., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1916, 48.

women were beginning to play in it.⁶¹ Like the mainstream English-language press, the German-American press also evolved to attract the growing segment of female readers and to speak to them specifically as consumers. Even in the years leading up to the war, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* advertised products that readers could purchase or even earn in exchange for signing up new readers. Prior to the war, these products included more traditional items like clothing patterns for dresses and aprons, books about motherhood, and cross-stitching patterns for homey wall hangings that welcomed guests. However, the revival, reawakening, and even defending of German identity experienced by German Americans across the country during the war created an opportunity for German-American women to continue exercising their newfound role in American consumerism, but to do so in ways that reflected their support for Germany. Therefore, everyday household items marketed specifically to women took on a larger significance due to the war. In addition, the politicization of these traditional, domestic, household goods like decorative pillows and collectible spoons, also contributed to the merging of their domestic and public spheres. Consumers and companies both profited from this politicization and commercialization. Publishing companies like *Hausfrau Publishing Company* capitalized on the pro-German mania that swept German-American communities. Indeed, as Frederick Luebke has noted in his study of the German-American experience during World War I, the German-language press was able to use the war to their advantage to gather further support for Germany.⁶² For their part, German-American women were able to exercise their views and political voice through their purchasing power and also display their pride in their German roots and support of Germany in the war.

⁶¹ Blaschke, "Communicating the Old and New," 313, 315-316, 321. See also Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promise of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁶² Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 95.

Not only could women show their support to Germany by spending money on such patriotic goods, but they could also direct their money toward wartime organizations, some of which were specifically intended to help German women and children. A new segment focusing on monetary donations for the citizens of Germany began to appear in the monthly issues of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* during the early years of the war and resonated strongly with readers. As early as the December 1914 issue, in a special bulletin within the opening pages, the magazine began to appeal to readers to donate to a relief fund for Germany:

A terrible, hard time has fallen over the old, beloved Fatherland. A world in arms - Russia, France, England, Belgium, and Japan are all against Germany and Austria-Hungary. There has never been such a terrible war. In this low time, we German Americans feel without exception the blood that flows through our veins boiling and sympathize with our hard-pressed relatives, whose self-sacrificing men protect the Fatherland and their hometowns and hearths from Cossacks, Frenchmen, Indians, and Muslim legions. The brave German soldiers who are committed to defending the Fatherland had to rush to the call of their country so quickly, they couldn't make arrangements for their wives and children and countless of them don't have the possibility to protect their loved ones from the worst emergencies. We all know that in this hour, hundreds of thousands of poor women are anxiously asking themselves how they should satisfy the hunger of their children. Therefore, it is our duty as German Americans to help these women and children, widows and orphans. We are proud of our readership that so many of you have expressed the idea to help and we are hereby creating a collection to aid the Fatherland. Donations will be tallied and printed by name in every issue and the money sent to the Fatherland through the German-Austrian Relief Fund of Wisconsin.⁶³

As promised, beginning with the following issue in January 1915, the magazine listed the names of those who had donated and the amounts, as well as the total amount collected to date. Often taking up an entire page in the magazine, the donation lists appeared in every issue through February 1917, with the exception of the February 1916 issue for reasons unexplained. According to the last donation list in the February 1917 issue, as of December 1916, readers had collectively donated \$3,135.65.⁶⁴ Adjusted for inflation, this amount equals \$65,262.61 today.⁶⁵

⁶³ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 3.

⁶⁴ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1917, 47.

That this money went to help German women and children left behind by their fighting husbands points to the ways in which such campaigns tied German speaking women in the U.S. to their counterparts across the Atlantic. In addition to their own fundraising efforts, the magazine also reported in its news segment, “*Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit*,” on the relief efforts led by German Americans around the country in support of the Fatherland.⁶⁶ In the “*Briefkasten der Redaktion*” segment, the editors responded to letters from readers, often praising them and German Americans everywhere for their generosity and willingness to donate to Germany’s cause.⁶⁷

In their letters to the magazine, many readers agreed with *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* on the importance of donating and collecting aid for their fellow countrymen in Germany. Readers wrote in from places like Honolulu, Hawaii and Watertown, New York describing the collection efforts they had joined in their cities.⁶⁸ Frau J.H.M. of Nebraska made donating a family affair: “I’m sending in \$2 – one for the renewal of my subscription and the other for the collection for Germany. We have 9 people in our family and everyone has agreed to give a dollar. This is our seventh dollar given and our two youngest will give their dollars in the next months, because we don’t know how long the war could last and then the need may be even bigger. If every German-American family member would give a dollar, then the Fatherland would have 20-30 million!”⁶⁹ For other readers, contributing to the relief effort felt like the best way to help the German cause from here in the U.S. As Frau Anna St. of Kansas wrote in November 1915, “Here in our new

⁶⁵ Calculated using the Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator, which is based here on the Consumer Price Index from December 1916 and December 2016 (<https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>).

⁶⁶ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1915, February 1915, and March 1915.

⁶⁷ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, April 1915, June 1915, August 1915, October 1915, November 1915, October 1916, January 1917, and February 1917.

⁶⁸ Agnes L., “*Briefe aus Deutschland*,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1915, 42; Margarethe Sch., *Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise*, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 42.

⁶⁹ J.H.M., *Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise*, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1916, 47.

home, there is nothing much we Germans can do for our German Fatherland, but we can send donations to help ease the distress of our German brothers.”⁷⁰

Through their donations to the relief funds and their efforts to encourage others to donate in their letters, German-American women demonstrated through their use of the press that they were active members of not just their local German-American community, but perhaps more importantly, their transnational community as well. They were concerned not only with the immediate issues facing German Americans in the U.S., but with the circumstances their extended families and fellow Germans in Germany were enduring. In this sense, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* served as a tool for the transnational mobilization of German-American women for their homeland. It fostered connections not only among readers domestically, but also internationally, therefore broadening the community of German women it supported to include a transnational audience.

GLORIFICATION OF GERMAN SOLDIERS, THE KAISER, AND THE GERMAN MILITARY

Another newfound theme in the content of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* during the early years of the war emphasized the many aspects of the German military. The topic of German soldiers was especially common. The magazine frequently published letters from the field written by German soldiers. As early as the December 1914 issue, a column was included entitled “Our Brave Soldiers’ Hearts,” which featured a letter a reader had received from her brother and had shared with the magazine. In the letter, her brother, who was fighting in the war in France, writes about feeling sorry for the French people and how much they are suffering. He also describes an incident in which he and his men came upon a house where a French woman and her six children

⁷⁰ Anna St., Offener Sprechsaal, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1915, 46.

were starving. The German soldiers made them something to eat. He adds that it is important to Germans to look after the women and children of the war: “it is truly German and it will always be so.”⁷¹ Other letters published from soldiers were less sentimental and described the daily lives of German soldiers with topics like the responsibilities of a base command in France, items soldiers are issued from the military (shirts, towels, soap, cigarettes, chocolate, etc.), the events of a good day in battle, and how the army engineers build bridges.⁷² In the “Briefkasten der Redaktion” section of the magazine, the editors’ responses to readers’ letters often referred to the bravery of German soldiers. In response to Kath. H. of Texas the editors wrote “our fellow countrymen are signing up for the war with such enthusiasm. Even old soldiers from 1870-1871 are wanting to reenlist to protect the Rhein. We can be very proud of our brave countrymen.”⁷³ They commented similarly to Frau Martin H. of Ohio, “how brave are our countrymen across the ocean?! Calmly and courageously they carry their fate in admirable unity.”⁷⁴ The “Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen” section also praised the bravery of the German soldiers while memorializing those who died in their essay to readers in December 1914:

...not a day goes by that we don’t think about our old Fatherland and the men that sacrifice for its happiness. They go to an almost assured death not only with courage and determination, but also enthusiasm...should we mourn these heroes? Surely not in the usual way. If we did it would only disgrace their memories if we sobbed and whined. They considered it an honor to die for the Fatherland, they approached the enemy with high hearts. They didn’t want any pity, tears, prize, fame, or glory.⁷⁵

In their letters to the magazine, readers were similarly moved by the bravery of the German soldiers. Frau Catherine D. of Ohio wrote that she had just received a letter from her sister in Germany and wanted to share with the magazine “how enthusiastically the Germans are

⁷¹ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 2.

⁷² *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1915, II, VI; May 1915, 13; and August 1915, 26. See also March 1915, 4.

⁷³ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 49.

⁷⁴ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 49.

⁷⁵ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, 16-17.

going to war... All the soldiers go proudly and are not sad and want to protect the Fatherland... They are all confident they will come back victorious, so hope us all that have German blood in us. Seven powers against one, God must and will help us.”⁷⁶ This sense of pride was also visible in other letters. In January 1915, an unidentified reader wrote, “I am proud of the German soldiers and believe that no other nation could have done what they have been able to do.”⁷⁷

Such open praise and interest in German soldiers among *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and its readers reveal the breadth of the political and war-themed topics German-American women were interested in and their sense of comradeship with other Germans, both male and female, positioning them as participants in the larger German community. Even though soldiers were tied to traditional male images that were public in nature and outside the domestic sphere, female readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* embraced their coverage in the magazine and the resulting politicization of their press. By sharing in soldiers’ accounts of the war, the link between the public and private world was strengthened. Furthermore, that the magazine often included letters from German soldiers (and German women) served to broaden the community of Germans that readers were connected to, extending the scope of the magazine from merely a publication for German-speaking women in the U.S. to a publication with transnational associations. Moreover, these transnational connections the magazine emphasized during the war were not limited to traditional, domestic topics, but rather often included international topics regarding the war, like first-hand accounts from German soldiers on the front. Even though many of these accounts detailed the militaristic side of being a soldier, other accounts, as in the example of the German soldier feeding the French family, served to humanize their experiences, distinguishing Germans as honorable, righteous, and good, and therefore deserving of a victory against their aggressors.

⁷⁶ Catherine D., “Aus Briefen von der alten Heimat,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 41.

⁷⁷ Stimmen aus dem Leserkreis, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1915, 46.

Praise for the Kaiser was also a trait of the wartime shift within the pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. In a speech given to German youth at Breslau University in August 1914 and then printed in the November 1914 issue of the magazine, a professor exclaimed, “The Kaiser expressed his needs for the Fatherland and never was a call answered so quickly. The air was still trembling from the proclamation of war and they were already running for the flags... We are so lucky to have the Kaiser... Lead us Kaiser!”⁷⁸ An article about “Germany During Wartime” also professed allegiance to the Kaiser: “We went into this war at the call of our Kaiser and until the end we will serve to achieve a righteous cause.”⁷⁹

Readers expressed equal admiration for the Kaiser in their letters to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. An unidentified reader wrote in, “God protects our dear Kaiser and preserves for him the earthly crown.”⁸⁰ A letter from a Swiss family, Herr und Frau C.A. Lutz and their ten children, even declared “I believe that the current Kaiser Wilhelm II is the best monarch in a long time. He is like a good father to his family and also a good father to this people... I hope, wish, and believe that the Kaiser, the father of six sons, and his brave, courageous army and the German people will be victorious.”⁸¹ For other readers, the love for the Kaiser extended to young children too. In a letter to the magazine, Frau L.F. of Pennsylvania tells the story of one of her five-year-old twin daughters commenting after bedtime prayers that in addition to Jesus, the Kaiser also lives in her heart.⁸²

Similar to their admiration towards German soldiers, readers’ praise towards the Kaiser indicates their comfort with and interest in militaristic figures who had traditionally existed mainly outside the domestic sphere in the very public world of politics. Due to the war and the

⁷⁸ Eugen Kühnemann, “Der Weltkrieg von 1914,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1914, 5-8.

⁷⁹ F.C. Witte, “Deutschland zur Kriegszeit,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, 12.

⁸⁰ Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1915, 46.

⁸¹ Herr und Frau C.A. Luß, Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, 46.

⁸² L.F., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1916, 43.

connections forged in the press between private and public worlds, figures such as the German soldiers and the Kaiser were increasingly incorporated in the domestic space. As an example, readers' perceptions of the Kaiser, historically a resolute political figure, as a more approachable patriarchal figure cherished by even young children, reveal the merging of the private and public realms.

Along with pieces on the German soldiers and the Kaiser, articles about the German military and its power pervaded the pages of the magazine after 1914. These articles covered a number of topics regarding the German military: how the military ranking system worked; modern war leadership and technology; the inner workings of the German military mail system; how the German camps stayed so neat; the difference in the various war medals; what a soldier's life entailed; gunshot wounds and soldiers; how far away cannon booms can be heard; and a leader of the German Army – August von Mackensen.⁸³ These articles often boasted about the skill and superiority of the Germans and their military. For example, in an article about what it was like to travel in a Zeppelin, the author, Martha Toeplitz, bragged “no other country has created such an elegant, grand, and comfortable airship, during the current war time or before, as Germany has.”⁸⁴

To such articles, readers responded positively and shared their adulation for the German military force as well. As L.C.K. wrote in February 1915, “Germany will be victorious in the world war because of morals, military, and culture! I feel sorry for France in a way, but I hope the zeppelins and the German cannons give it hard to the English. God give the Germans a great victory and then a much-deserved peace!”⁸⁵

⁸³ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1915, 49; February 1915, 17; April 1915, 28-29; February 1916, 9; May 1915, 23; July 1915, 32; March 1916, 18; November 1915, 10; and July 1916, 12-13.

⁸⁴ Martha Toeplitz, “Im Zeppelin,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1915, 6.

⁸⁵ L.C.K., *Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise*, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1915, 47.

IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AND WAR

Lastly, a final recurring theme within the nationalistic, war-themed pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* was the important role of women in the war and its politics. Articles titled “German Women During War Time” and “The War and Women” lauded the various ways German women were contributing to the war effort while asserting that they were just as important as men.⁸⁶ In addition, rhetoric about the sacrifices made by German women and the hardships they endured without complaining dominated the magazine. As early as the November 1914 issue, the editors addressed this topic in the “Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen” section of the magazine: “Indeed, the German women are rightfully praised for having the devotion and the strength to do all that they can for their loved ones and for selflessly doing all they can for the Fatherland... German women stand behind their soldiers and are strong, praiseworthy, and willing to lose their men and be sad for the sake of the Fatherland.”⁸⁷ Less than a year later in August 1915, the editors wrote to their readers again to defend German women from the non-German press: “We know that the claims that appear in local newspapers that German women are complaining about the great number of sacrifices are not true. On the contrary, we know that German woman are strong and know no limits to their readiness to sacrifice...The German woman today is just as strong, patriotic, and proud as during the times when the ancient Germans fought the Romans.”⁸⁸ In praising German women for their sacrifices in Europe, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also urged its readers in the U.S. to follow their example. In the same open letter to their readers, the editors added “we have to do everything we can to help minimize the effects of the war and help it to stop sooner. The German women cannot do it all, we have to help. No

⁸⁶ Martha Toeplitz, “Deutsche Frauen zur Kriegszeit,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 16-18 and Wilhelm C. Laube, “Der Krieg und die Frauen,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1915, 6-8.

⁸⁷ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1914, 16-17.

⁸⁸ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1915, 16-17.

sacrifice is too big or too hard.”⁸⁹ In their response to Sophie H. of California, the editors further encouraged readers to follow the example set by German women: “the women in Germany don’t complain, they all give their enthusiasm and love for the Fatherland. So we must also take that as a model for how we should be.”⁹⁰ By praising the women of Germany in their articles and encouraging their readers to also appreciate and assist them, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* facilitated further transnational connections between German-speaking women in the U.S. and in Germany. In this sense, the press reinforced a transnational community of German women linked together by their mutual support of Germany and pride in German womanhood.

Perhaps even more significant than the rhetoric regarding the sacrifices of German women, were comments that proclaimed German women as even more important to victory and to rebuilding Germany after the war than male soldiers. Remarks from the “Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen” section of the April 1915 issue are especially noteworthy:

Germany will experience a rebirth after the war. That will be where the worth of the German woman shines. She keeps things going while the men face death in enemy lands. She still keeps caring for the family. She still carries all the burdens and lets no one see her tears. The German woman will be the actual victor, because through her efforts, the German people will be rejuvenated and we will owe our thanks to her when Germany is strong, ready to work, and moral after the war, like no other land can rival.⁹¹

Even more poignant, in one of the most pro-women pieces of the magazine, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also declared in February 1915:

There are so many activities in a given day for a woman to take care of... We must compare them to the men that are away fighting who were happy to fight for their Fatherland. They would never forget their women and children, yet they are protected due to the chaos around them from the worst kind of loneliness - surrounded by people, yet still missing the one they are used to. This is doubly hard for women because they must also worry when that person is coming home, if they’ll be healthy when they do,

⁸⁹ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1915, 16-17.

⁹⁰ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, 49.

⁹¹ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1915, 16-17.

etc. This uncertainty, this back and forth between hope and fear, between optimism and despondency is terrible. The soldier must have his own stresses as he waits constantly for death, but the women have it harder. It must be so terrible for the woman, who was always so proud of her husband who earned an income and did not owe anyone, to now have to stand in line to receive a small sum of money and have to rely on the help of other people and welfare money. She worries constantly and finds it hard to trust and realizes how dependent she was. There are thousands of such women like this in Germany today. She does her duties from day to day and under increasingly hard circumstances. We can't make a wreath for her but we can honor her and bow to her... The German woman deserves as much praise as the German soldier. She is near and dear to our hearts, perhaps even nearer and we want her to know that our hearts still beat for the old Fatherland and that we are so thankful to them and all of the German people.⁹²

Such articles point to the gendered ways in which women experienced war. The magazine suggested that German women sacrificed and contributed in ways different from, but equal (and sometimes superior) to, German men. That *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* printed these stories reveals the ethnic press as a critical site for building transnational, but also gendered, communities of readers that advocated specific roles for women as mothers, wives, and daughters.

Another way that the magazine sought to highlight the contribution of women in their discussion of the war and politics was through the especially sorrowful experiences of German mothers. In poems like "The Mothers," which appeared in the July 1915 issue, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* recognized that the war was particularly hard for women whose sons were off fighting in it.⁹³ The magazine also referred to the unique pain German mothers were experiencing in the "Briefkasten der Redaktion" section, where they responded to readers' letters. To Frau A.F. of Nebraska they wrote, "yes, it is a hard test for the mother's heart to have to worry about a son in the war."⁹⁴ To a letter from Marie A. of Minneosta they responded, "yes, you are right, a great sorrow for a mother is the death of a son. You have our deepest condolences. And how many

⁹² Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1915, 16-17.

⁹³ "Die Mütter," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1915, 12.

⁹⁴ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1915, 51.

poor mothers will there be now in Europe, whose sons or husbands went in to the war strong and healthy and who come back disabled. We agree also, if only this war would end soon victoriously for our relatives.”⁹⁵

This celebration of women as the silent backbone of society and the recognition that their contributions were as equally as important to a German victory (if not more) than the military’s, demonstrates one of the important roles that women played in their communities. Although the magazine emphasized the more traditional, domestic role of women as caregivers and mothers rather than a more outspoken, active, political role in the public sphere, the domestic sphere was still politicized; *die Deutsche Hausfrau* assigned a significant amount of power and responsibility to this domestic role and it was viewed as crucial to Germany’s success. The casting of the German woman as the true victor of the German people through her ability and strength to single-handedly manage the homefront during the war demonstrated that female readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* were still participating as active members of their German-American community and contributing even from their domestic world inside the home. As the next chapter further explores, even the more traditional female tasks like preserving customs and language were viewed by readers as important contributions and vital to the pro-German cause. Moreover, the empathy and comradeship with which the magazine spoke of the women in Germany further enhanced the transnational community of readers that flourished in the pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. By emphasizing the various experiences and roles of German women in the war, the press cultivated transnational links between them and their readers in the U.S., drawing on their shared maternal duties and traditional roles as mothers.

In their own letters to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, readers expressed similar adulation for the women in Germany. Those with first-hand knowledge of the situation in the Fatherland

⁹⁵ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 48.

commented on the way that German women were successfully handling things there. A reader from Germany, Muttel Hoffman wrote, “The women of Germany are taking care of everything... Women are doing the work of men.”⁹⁶ Readers also understood the sensitivity of those with sons fighting in the war. In a letter to the editors, Frau Ursula S. of New York wrote that she had two sons fighting on the front and referred to herself as a “war mother.”⁹⁷ However, whereas the magazine focused mainly on the experiences and contributions of women in Germany, readers naturally expanded their own sentiments to include German-American women in the U.S. They inserted themselves into discussions of war and its policies, insisting that both German and German-American women sacrificed, contributed, and engaged in politics. In a profound statement about the need for women to be politically active, Frau Phil. B. of Idaho commented, “My husband and I discuss everything about the war and politics because we believe that the woman must also be knowledgeable about the world in order to raise her children to be good people.”⁹⁸ Other readers called for women to not only be politically knowledgeable, but also politically vocal as well when contributing to the war effort. As Frau Anna St. of Kansas added, “we can also use our tongues to combat the shameful lies about our dear Fatherland.”⁹⁹

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF READERS’ LETTERS: IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, ACTIVISM

These examples of the war-themed content within the pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* emphasize the fervent support for Germany that was increasingly conveyed in the magazine during the first few years of the war. Although smaller, nondescript sections of the magazine like recipes, gardening tips, games for children, and sewing patterns remained unchanged, the

⁹⁶ Muttel Hoffman, Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1916, 48.

⁹⁷ Ursula S. Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1916, 48.

⁹⁸ Phil B., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1916, 43.

⁹⁹ Offener Sprechsaal, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1915, 46.

overwhelming obsession with the war and politics influenced nearly every other section. While coverage of the war and domestic and international relations was perhaps expected in the news section of the magazine, these topics overflowed into other areas which would have otherwise typically been considered non-political, such as songs, poems, and embroidered pillows. Indeed, between the fall of 1914 and the spring of 1917, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* became genuinely fixated on the war and engrossed in its politics.

However, more important than this nationalistic turn in the content of the magazine, are the letters from readers showing that they embraced this turn and idolized it for its defense of Germany. From the news coverage to the free gift items, readers praised the magazine's newfound tone in their letters. In addition to commending the politicized and war-themed content of specific segments and columns, readers also expressed their overall satisfaction with the magazine due to its continued support for Germany. Comments like "how valiantly *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* has arisen to Germany's cause," "thank you for so bravely defending the Fatherland during these hard war times," and "it makes us happy that you have stood by our Fatherland" were common in readers' letters.¹⁰⁰ Readers also often stated in their letters how the magazine was a source of comfort for them. One reader explained, "in these hard times, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* is such a comfort for anyone who has a heart for Germany. It gives us courage and hope."¹⁰¹

Not only did readers welcome the focus on war and politics within the pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, but they also expressed their support for Germany with nationalistic rhetoric of their own on the topics of politics, military, and war. The ardent opinions expressed by readers on topics such as President Wilson, the English influence on the American press, and the

¹⁰⁰ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1915, 46; December 1915, 47; and March 1916, 48.

¹⁰¹ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1916, 43.

superiority of the German Kaiser and his military bring to light their own preoccupation with the war.

Such letters from readers that applauded the pro-German politicized and war-themed content of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and expressed readers' own nationalistic sentiments on the war and politics are important for three reasons. First, that readers praised the intensified coverage of Germany and expressed such pro-German sentiments themselves reveals the extent to which they still identified with their German roots politically. When the news broke that Germany was at war, not all German Americans felt the need to write letters to the German-language newspapers expressing support for the Kaiser, criticism of Germany's enemies, admiration for German soldiers and women, and desires to donate to their cause. Indeed, not every German American still felt a strong connection to their Germanness. However, many did, like the readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, and they expressed this in their letters to the press. Historians of the German-American press like Carl Wittke have also noted how German Americans' ties to Germany were strengthened during World War I, especially among readers of the German-language press.¹⁰² In the case of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and its readers, the strength of their German identity and their continued sense of politically belonging to Germany is significant because it challenges the assertion made by other historians like Monika Blaschke that the magazine's nationalistic shift alienated readers and only reflected the viewpoints of the male editor.¹⁰³ Although Blaschke has argued that women lost an important mouthpiece for their personal interests when *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* made the ideological shift towards pro-German nationalism during World War I, many German-American female readers continued to utilize the magazine to express their continued connections to Germany and their German-American

¹⁰² Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War*, 22.

¹⁰³ Blaschke, *die Entdeckung des weiblichen Publikums*, 305.

identity. Undoubtedly, there were some readers whose views were not as pro-German as *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*'s, but as the overwhelming majority of letters indicate, readers did not just simply tolerate this shift, but rather celebrated and embraced it because it reinforced their desire to remain politically connected to their Germanness. Also noteworthy is that women in particular appear to have held strong connections to their Germanness, as evidenced in the letters from readers. As Russell A. Kazal and Birte Pfleger have both noted in their studies of German-American clubs and organizations during World War I, German-American women were increasingly active and vocal participants, often compensating for reduced participation among men.¹⁰⁴ Such data, along with the anecdotal evidence in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* suggests that women held especially strong connections to their German identity and sense of Germanness. As the next chapter explores, one possible explanation is that women's role as preserver of German culture and language for their families and communities afforded them a sense of duty to their identity and a closer understanding of what was at stake if ties to Germanness receded due to the war.

Second, the use of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* to voice their opinions offered readers a unique platform for expression that enabled a connection between their domestic and public spheres. By sending in letters to the magazine with the knowledge that they might be published, readers were going beyond discussing the war and politics in their own homes, and instead sharing their opinions with the public. Written at a time when politics and the press were otherwise dominated by men and before women in the U.S. could vote, their letters offer unique insight into the opinions of German-American women and their use of the press to express them. By employing the press as a means to share in the events affecting their communities in the U.S. and in Germany, readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* who wrote letters to the magazine also used

¹⁰⁴ Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*, 8, 79-92; Pfleger, "Charity Before Government Welfare," 61-62.

their immigrant community to connect their “private and public worlds.”¹⁰⁵ For German-American women, the press was likely a natural and comfortable medium for expressing their views in the public sphere, considering how long the robust industry of the German-American press had been established in their community. In this, the press resembled other outlets of social and public action utilized by German-American women during this time, such as women’s clubs and auxiliary groups, in that they also encouraged women to be engaged in the public sphere. Furthermore, using the letters to the editor platform to join their two worlds also allowed readers to create and be active in a virtual community of women within the pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. These findings add to the work of immigration scholars like Monika Blaschke, Donna Gabaccia, and Vicki Ruiz. Blaschke also noted in her work on *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and German-American women’s press how the letter writing forums allowed readers to interact with one another.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Gabaccia and Ruiz pointed out how such interactions in the press helped to bridge private and public worlds and create communities among immigrant women.¹⁰⁷

Finally, readers’ letters signify that these women were active members of their communities and in tune with the collective issues affecting their community in the U.S. and in the homeland. Their enthusiastic participation was not limited to their local German-American communities in the U.S., but rather also included the transnational community of readers that was cultivated in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* due to the frequent publication of letters from readers in Germany. As Carl Wittke has also pointed out, the German-American press was indeed a tool used by German Americans to maintain transatlantic connections.¹⁰⁸ Through their communication in the press with other women in their local and transnational communities,

¹⁰⁵ Gabaccia and Ruiz, “Migrations and Destinations,” 8.

¹⁰⁶ Blaschke, “Communicating the Old and the New,” 323-324.

¹⁰⁷ Gabaccia and Ruiz, “Migrations and Destinations,” 8.

¹⁰⁸ Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, 1-8.

readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* demonstrated that they were not passive, apolitical bystanders to the major world events that were occurring around them. Instead, they were acutely aware and involved in the political milieu of the times and were active participants in the dialogue about the war that was taking place within the greater German-American community. In this sense, as Maxine Seller has also noted in her work, immigrant women were invested members of their ethnic communities and contributed by participating in the politics that affected them.¹⁰⁹ However, while readers were eager to exercise their political voices in the press, as the next chapter demonstrates, German-American women's participation and contributions to the pro-Germany cause during the war were also visible in more traditional, maternal ways such as preserving ties to their German language, customs, relatives, and homeland.

¹⁰⁹ Seller, "Beyond the Stereotype," 59-70.

CHAPTER 3

“GERMAN WOMEN STAY GERMAN LONGER AND STRONGER”: MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS TO HERITAGE

INTRODUCTION

I like to read the *Hausfrau* during these hard times for our dear old Fatherland, where the entire world is against the Germans and all are trying to destroy the whole country. Because of that, we Germans must stick together as much as possible so that our language and everything that is German doesn't disappear, and for that *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* is a great tool. It is certainly right that every German here built their life here with their family and thinks they have duties as American citizens. But we also should not forget the place where our cradle stood, where our mother spent many sleepless nights, and where we heard the first sound out of our mother's mouth. Whoever has real German blood in their veins and has been here for a while and still doesn't regard this country so highly cannot forget the country of their parents. I will never forget my home on the Rhein and it hurts my heart so much to see the sadness in the families as they think about their fathers, brothers, and sons who have died on the field of honor. May God turn things for the best for our old Fatherland and not let it fall after all of these sacrifices.¹

- Frau C. Sch., W., October 1915

In the fall of 1914, as the articles and commentary in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and readers' letters grew increasingly fixated on the war and politics in their support for Germany, another prominent theme in their rhetoric was emerging. Alongside their politicized words of praise for the German soldiers and their disdain for the English press, the magazine and its readers also increasingly expressed their support for Germany by advocating for the preservation of their German heritage. As the letter above from Frau C. Sch. demonstrates, readers were particularly concerned with the fate of their German homeland, language, customs, and relatives—elements of German heritage that they perceived to come under intense attack during the war. Their passionate defense of German culture points to their participation in both their local and

¹ C. Sch., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1915, 47.

transnational communities of Germans, their usage of the press to mobilize their fellow readers to fight for German culture, and the enduring strength of their German cultural identity.

As the opening letter reveals, readers demonstrated that they were in tune with the issues facing those who have “real German blood in their veins”—both Germans in the U.S. and those across the Atlantic.² By underscoring the importance of relatives and families in Germany in their letters, readers reinforced and furthered the connections they maintained within their larger international community, revealing the strength of continued transnational ties. Furthermore, even though the preservation of German culture often reflected traditional and maternal ideals of womanhood, something distinctly separate from the predominately masculine realm of war and politics, readers did not view discussions of German culture as peripheral to war. Instead, women saw the heritage they preserved as an equally important way of contributing to Germany victory on the battlefield. Moreover, German-American women continued to use the press to merge their private and public worlds and to mobilize other readers to fight for German culture. Rather than striving privately to preserve elements of German heritage within their own homes, German-American women publicly promoted the urgent need to other female readers through *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. By responding to the war in terms of preserving culture and heritage, readers also revealed a strong sense of German cultural identity and sense of belonging that was tied to the German roots of one’s mother, one’s birthplace, or one’s blood, as in the letter above, regardless of one’s role or sense of belonging as an American. The German cultural identity this fostered differed from, but complimented the more political one linked to discourse about war and politics, as the last chapter showed. Ultimately, this closeness to German culture and heritage was evident among readers regardless of how long they had lived in the U.S. or whether or not they had been born there.

² C. Sch., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1915, 47.

Such an emphasis on German heritage was not completely new to the pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* when the war began in Europe. The publication had striven to blend German and American influences since its beginning in 1904, and articles, poems, and other regular columns on the topics of the German culture and its people, language, and homeland were not uncommon before the war. Certain columns appeared regularly in each monthly issue and offered readers a piece of their old homeland. Perhaps the most beloved example was the travel series titled “Meine Alte Heimat nach 25 Jahren” (My Old Homeland After 25 Years), which featured an exposé on a certain city or region of Germany (or sometimes Switzerland or Austria) each month. Another regular section that allowed readers to remain connected with their German roots was the news section “Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit,” which featured news reports from around the world, but also stories and pictures from Germany. In addition, monthly columns titled “Wer Sucht Verwandte und Bekannte?” (Looking for Relatives and Friends?) and “Briefwechsel erwünscht” (Letter Exchange Wanted) acted as forums where readers could seek out family or friends from the old country with whom they had lost touch, or other Germans living in America who may have immigrated from the same town in Germany and were looking to establish a connection with fellow countrymen in the U.S. Readers often wrote in how much they enjoyed all of these columns because of the connections they collectively reinforced with their old homeland.³

However, beginning in the fall of 1914 with Germany at war, references to German heritage became increasingly nationalistic. While *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* had always concerned itself with ties to German heritage, rhetoric regarding the immediate need to preserve and maintain elements of German heritage became much more pronounced and serious as both the magazine and its readers began to construct their support for Germany in such terms. Like the

³ For example see Offener Sprechsaal, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1914, 46 and May 1914, 38.

obsession with the war and politics, the exaggerated pride in German heritage that swept *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* after the start of the war was immediately recognizable in the content of the magazine and readers' letters to the editor. To show their unwavering support for Germany, they began to vehemently glorify and defend all aspects of their German heritage including their culture, language, and homeland. Women, specifically, were charged by their ethnic communities and by themselves to preserve and defend culture and family networks. Many women embraced this role and viewed it as their feminine duty. This reflects the work of other scholars like Micaela Di Leonardo who has noted how the work of kinship – such as cross-household letter writing between family members, the organization of celebrations and holidays, and maintaining contacts with kin and quasi-kin – has historically fallen on women.⁴

TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES, GERMANNES, AND PRIDE

One of the most prominent themes in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* after the start of the war was acknowledging, celebrating, and maintaining the German culture and the concept of one's "Germanness." This focus on German heritage manifested itself throughout the content of the magazine in several ways. One of the primary messages the magazine sought to send to its readers was the importance of unity and solidarity with Germans in the old homeland. Beginning with the October 1914 issue in a letter to readers on the occasion of the new volume year, the magazine declared that it was "expressing what every reader feels: the solidarity of all Germans against our enemies whether it be over there in our old home or here in our new one."⁵ The following month, the magazine published a poem titled "Für Deutschland" (For Germany), the so-called "battle cry" of the *Deutsch-Amerikanische National-Bund* (National German-American

⁴ Micaela di Leonardo, "The Female World of Cards and Holidays: Women, Families, and the Work of Kinship," *Signs* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1987): 440-453.

⁵ "Zum neuen Jahrgang," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1914, 2.

Alliance), which further promoted unity among all German people: “to our German brothers over there, from your blood over here, we are also arisen, joined to the cause, full force! We’re taking a strong stand for the old Fatherland! ... We want to stand up for you, we want to go to you, for Germany! One people, one heart, one spirit!”⁶ The magazine depicted a readership that, while situated physically in the U.S., was positioned spiritually and culturally in Germany. In a response to a letter from Frau K. Sch. of New Hampshire in the “Briefkasten der Redaktion” column, the female editors replied, “All of us Germans are in Germany in our thoughts more than we are here, as you also pointed out in your friendly letter. If our internal thoughts and desires could help, we would certainly be able to contribute to a victory. At the least, we can show that even at a distance we are united in our feelings for the old Fatherland, as our relatives are there.”⁷ In the same column in subsequent issues, the editors responded similarly to other readers’ letters. To Frau P. Z. of North Dakota they wrote, “Yes, we Germans here in America must also stick together strongly, in order to stand by our old Fatherland in their distress.”⁸ Even in the monthly news column, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* reported on German unity in the U.S.: “Germans all over the U.S. have been working together to raise money for the Fatherland and their emergency situation there by collecting donations... All Germans are united in their Germanness...”⁹ For their part, readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* welcomed and agreed with the magazine’s push and advocacy for the German culture. On the topic of German unity, Frau Phil. B.’s letter to the editors echoed their sentiments that “the Germans belong together no matter

⁶ Wilhelm Benignus, “Für Deutschland,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1914, 3.

⁷ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 49.

⁸ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 51.

⁹ Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1915, 15.

where they may be.”¹⁰ Unity and solidarity among all Germans was viewed as a way of showing support for Germany in the war and maintaining ties to their German heritage.

Such concern for and connectedness with their fellow Germans in Germany sheds light on the how the war intensified transnational connections and how the magazine promoted these connections among its readership. Through this push for unity among Germans everywhere, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and its readers perpetuated a community spirit that spanned the Atlantic and was based on the shared, collective goal of a German victory in the war. In this sense, Germanness was not limited to one nation state, but rather transcended physical distance to connect Germans in the U.S. and Germany. Germanness was also not limited to the first generation. In their call for German unity, the magazine and its readers attempted to rally the larger German-American public to the cause. By focusing on the importance of one’s Germanness, the press hoped to appeal to second- and third-generation German Americans who may have felt less connected politically to Germany, but were more apt to respond to pleas about heritage and cultural belonging. Indeed, other historians like Carl Wittke, who studied the German-American press during World War I, have also argued that the German-American press sought to strengthen ties to Germany among its readers during the war.¹¹ Another historian of German Americans during World War I, Frederick Luebke, has also argued that despite the diversity among German Americans, the German-language press united many of them in support for Germany.¹²

This focus on the solidarity and unity of the German people is further evident in the comments from the editors and readers regarding their relatives in Germany. In their open letters to their readers and in the responses to their letters, the editorial staff wrote of the connections

¹⁰ Phil. B., *Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise*, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1916, 43.

¹¹ Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War*, 30-36.

¹² Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 45.

and sympathy they shared with the people of Germany due to family ties. These ties are significant because they indicate that many German Americans maintained long distance connections to family members in Germany. Although they were safe and untouched by war in the U.S., they were still affected by the experiences of their relatives in the war and readily shared in those experiences with them. As early as December 1914, as the magazine called on readers to send in donations, declaring, “in this low time, we German Americans feel without exception the blood that flows through our veins boiling and sympathize with our hard pressed relatives.”¹³ In an open letter to readers in January 1916, the editors further exclaimed: “in the past year we have hoped for peace to be granted to the people who we not only a share a long lineage and past with, but with whom we are also connected with loyal love, and we have also hoped that they come out of the war as the victor and with few sacrifices and losses.”¹⁴ Several letters with similar rhetoric were published where readers also lamented the number of their brothers, nephews, sons, cousins, and in-laws who were fighting in the war and grieved those who had died. Readers often referred to the death of loved ones in battle as a “hero’s death.”

Depictions of family life and culture that spanned the Atlantic in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* exemplifies the transnational quality of German migration; when German families migrated to the U.S., they were not simply cut off from their relatives in the old homeland. Instead, families stayed connected across the ocean. In addition, as historians have well noted, for many German Americans the German-language press served as a tool for maintaining transnational connections between the old and new homeland.¹⁵ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* recognized this transnational aspect of German migration and tapped into this function of the press to gather broader support for Germany in the war.

¹³ “An unsere Leserinnen,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 3.

¹⁴ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1916, 18.

¹⁵ Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, 1-8.

To promote the merits of the German culture and its people in their support for Germany, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also included many references regarding the superior qualities and characteristics of Germans. Letters to the editor from readers highlighted the qualities that they thought made Germans superior to other ethnic groups. According to a letter from Frau B. H. of Ohio, “piety, honesty, and truth make Germans and Germany great.”¹⁶ In the other content areas of the magazine, observations and affirmations about the supremacy of the German people most commonly appeared in the open letters to readers within the monthly “Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen” column and included statements that portrayed Germans as possessing qualities that set them apart from other cultures such as bravery, readiness to sacrifice, strong will and character, and seriousness.¹⁷

At times, the rhetoric in these open letters verged on cultural chauvinism. In comparing Germans to Americans, the editors claimed “the Americans do not work as hard as the Germans...Instead of Americans, it is the immigrant that does the hard construction work, also in industry, laboratories, bureaus, schools, etc... We Germans are not as valued as we should be. But we shouldn’t be upset, instead we should remain hard workers and use our characteristic of patience to our advantage.”¹⁸ In comparing themselves to other societies in general, the editors also commented in another issue that “the German sense of duty and the awareness that one doesn’t just work for himself but for the greater good of mankind and therefore must give all they have is foreign to other societies and cultures.”¹⁹ Germans, the editors suggested, were uniquely selfless and outward facing, working for the “greater good of mankind.” They were exceptional among cultures in their dedication to hard work.

¹⁶ “Aus Briefen von der alten Heimat,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 41.

¹⁷ See Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1915, 16; October 1915, 16; May 1916, 15; and May 1917, 12.

¹⁸ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, June 1915, 16.

¹⁹ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, June 1916, 15.

As many historians of the war-fueled anti-German hysteria have noted, there was widespread distrust of all things German among the public and government during the war.²⁰ Therefore, such sentiments about the superiority of the German people are telling because they show the desire of many German Americans to glorify and celebrate the various characteristics of their culture at a time when the rest of the world was criticizing and denouncing the German people. Rather than disassociating themselves and retreating from these ties to their German heritage, the magazine and its readers embraced this renewed sense of pride in their German ways and aimed to set themselves above all other cultures, thus reasserting ties to their Germanness.

Another way *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* stressed the importance of German culture in its content was by encouraging readers to be proud of their Germanness. In their responses to readers' letters, the editorial staff instilled the value of German pride at every opportunity. In a reply to a letter from Frau Christiana L. in October 1915, they answered, "yes, the terrible war elicits a lot of sadness despite all the victories our brave comrades have had... More than ever we can be proud to be German."²¹ Pride in the German culture was even explicitly mentioned by the magazine as a way readers could directly support Germany in the war and show their gratitude to the German soldiers who had sacrificed everything. In an open letter to readers in the March 1915 issue, the magazine declared that in addition to monetary donations, German Americans could also show their thanks to the fallen German soldiers by maintaining "unwavering pride about the cleverness and supremacy of the German people and their lineage."²² Sometimes this focus on German pride took on an air of defensiveness. On the occasion of its new volume year

²⁰ See Wittke, *German-Americans and the World War*, Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, and Kirschbaum, *The Eradication of German Culture in the United States: 1917-1918*.

²¹ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1915, 49.

²² Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, 17.

in October 1915, the magazine opened with a message to its readers about its allegiance to the old homeland and boldly declared “Germany will be victorious!” and “We remain German!”²³ Similar rhetoric in the monthly open letter to readers in the December 1915 issue also ardently defended their sense of Germanness:

Every one of us who immigrated here must be proud until our last day that people see us as Germans and we can never wish to be anything else and our children must also be proud of their German heritage. We can be good American citizens, but outside of our duties as citizens, we should stay German... We will stay true to our beliefs and Germanness and teach our children to do so... No one can steal our beliefs from us about what the German people are called to do and our unwavering pride that we descend from the German people.²⁴

This message from *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* to its readers illustrates the cultural sense of belonging that the magazine also promoted. While it also reached out through its coverage of the war and politics to German Americans who enjoyed more of a political sense of belonging and German identity (as examined in the previous chapter), by also highlighting the merits of staying connected to their German heritage, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* was able to appeal to other types of German Americans who were more drawn to the notion of protecting and preserving their German roots than they may have been to the politics of the war.

In addition, as early as the November 1914 issue, readers were also stressing the importance of maintaining one’s sense of Germanness in their letters. Frau Amalie Beck of Milwaukee, Wisconsin wrote, “in this hard time which has befallen our beloved Fatherland, we have a double responsibility to cherish our Germanness. As in the war of 1870, God will protect the Germans and our righteous efforts.”²⁵ This defensive and protective response concerning their German heritage suggests that the magazine and its readers perceived a great threat to their

²³ “Zum neuen Jahrgang,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1915, 2.

²⁴ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1915, 15-16.

²⁵ Amalie Beck, Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1914, 47.

Germanness due to the war and the ensuing anti-German sentiment in the U.S. and therefore, felt more compelled than ever to defend their heritage and their German identity.

Die Deutsche Hausfrau's focus on the preservation and promotion of German culture during the early years of the war was also visible in articles that promoted German customs and traditions. One particular article published during this period was titled "Alte deutsche Sitten und Gebräuche" (Old German Customs and Traditions). The author, Wilhelm C. Laube, discussed German customs that originated with the "forefathers" and begins the article with a quote by Friedrich Schiller, the famous German poet, philosopher, historian, and playwright, about how "community" makes a man. Laube uses this quote to explain that "community, in this case, the traditions and customs which one is used to and with which one is raised, is essential and part of our character, part of our being."²⁶ Another article showcased the importance of the German influence on classical music.²⁷ Still, other pieces produced by the editorial staff of the journal also emphasized connections to German customs and traditions. In an open letter to readers in the monthly "Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen" column, the magazine reminded readers about the importance of German traditions like the Christmas tree: "stress it to your children under the lights of the tree that their ancestors brought the Christmas tree tradition to the U.S. just like many other good traditions."²⁸

Perhaps the most impassioned language on the topic of German culture and Germanness centered around the concept of a "great awakening" experienced by German Americans because of the war. Like most of the zealous proclamations that appeared in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, the open letters to the readers in the "Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen" column provided the main

²⁶ Wilhelm C. Laube, "Alte deutsche Sitten und Gebräuche," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1916, 5-7.

²⁷ Wilhelm C. Laube, "Der Deutsche und die Musik," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1915, 9-10.

²⁸ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1915, 15.

platform for such expressions. One example from January 1916 reveals the fervor with which they often wrote:

The German spirit is awakening everywhere. At this time of the New Year we must look at the past and make plans for the future. We have to hold on to what we've built. We don't want to build a city within a city, but we want to stay German in our hearts and our souls. The German language and the German song, German poetry, and German character should live and bloom as it once did. We can do this if we put our minds to it even when there aren't many of us like before. Everything from the old homeland, in speech and writing, in fact and spirit, has to be supported and held up high with the utmost effort: the German press, the German clubs, the German church groups. Only that way can we stay who we are. Think about what our brothers and sisters in Germany have had to go through. Should we let them down after they have given so much. No, indeed! Never again on this earth should a person be humiliated for being German! We can only prevent it when we show we are proud to be German or proud to have come from Germans all the time - in happy times and in hard times. Don't just put your hands in your lap until freedom comes, prove yourselves worthy to your fellow countrymen, open your windows and doors wide so that Germany's splendor echoes all around, and stand firm with others who tell of the Fatherland. Then, will this New Year be a blessing to us all.²⁹

Rather than appeal directly to readers' political loyalties, the magazine instead emphasized "German language and the German song, German poetry, and German character"—cultural aspects of "Germany's splendor." It also focused on transnational family ties by reminding readers to "think about our brothers and sisters in Germany." This served to emphasize a cultural and familial sense of belonging and identity that was perhaps more realistic and attainable for the majority of the German-American population than one based on political belonging and identity. In this sense, there were likely more Americans who could relate to an aspect of German heritage – such as language, family, customs – than those who could directly identify politically with Germany (although readers' letters suggest there were many who did nonetheless). Therefore, appealing to an audience of German Americans who could relate to aspects of German culture opened up the number of individuals who supported Germany in the war.

²⁹ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1916, 18-19.

This increased attention to the solidarity and superiority of the German people and the pride and passion for German culture and traditions illustrates the fervent views the editors of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and its readers held regarding their heritage. For many of them, during this time of heightened threat to all things German, it was not enough to simply “be” German. Rather, one had to “own” their Germanness and display it proudly to show their support for Germany in the war. This required that they cease the balanced approach to their hyphenated identity that they had previously enjoyed before the war and bring their sense of Germanness to the fore, which many readers appear to have done easily and with enthusiasm. Often more than just nationalistic rhetoric, this pride in their culture was often presented as chauvinistic and ethnocentric as it glorified Germans and their culture above all others. While *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and many readers had always maintained an interest in their culture and heritage, the onset of war intensified and rekindled connections to their German heritage. By strengthening the ties that they felt with their culture, the war itself played an important role in reinforcing the significance of heritage and serving as the catalyst that translated these feelings into pro-German nationalism.

Immigration scholars have debated the effects of World War I on German-American identity. Carl Wittke, in his work on the German-American press during World War I, argued that ties to Germany strengthened for many German Americans during World War I, especially among readers of the German-American press. Other historians, however, have downplayed German Americans’ connections to their Germanness. In his work on German Americans during World War I, for example, Frederick Luebke argues that fear of persecution during World War I caused many German Americans to assimilate rapidly into mainstream society. Still other historians like Peter Conolly-Smith and Russell A. Kazal have asserted that German Americans

had already started to lose sight of their Germanness and German identity before the war even started and that the war and the resulting anti-German sentiment merely sped up the inevitable. However, in his study of German-American organizations in the Philadelphia area, Kazal does note that downplaying Germanness did not seem to apply to German-American women, suggesting that they maintained stronger connections to their German heritage and identity.³⁰ In the case of the female editors and readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, their increased dedication to aspects of their German roots during the war echoes Kazal's finding that women were particularly connected to their German heritage in spite of, and perhaps even because of, the anti-German sentiment in the U.S. during the war. In this sense, readers either stood up to the hysteria that targeted all things German during that time and continued to stay true to their German identities or it was the hysteria itself and the attacks on aspects of Germanness that reignited their pro-German identities out of their desire to defend the homeland.

LANGUAGE

Another element of German heritage that was increasingly praised and defended in the pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* during the early years of the war was language. While the preservation of the German language had always been central to the magazine, after the war began in Europe it became especially important to the magazine and many of its readers. As early as October 1914, on the occasion of the new volume year in an open letter to readers, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* declared its mission to continue to preserve the German language: "Hand in hand together we want to continue the efforts towards the preservation of the German language also here in our new country so that one day, the American youth can still enjoy this treasure as

³⁰ Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*, 8, 79-92.

they will owe their parents for that fine heritage.”³¹ As months of war went by and the German language increasingly became a target of anti-German sentiment in the U.S., the magazine’s defense of the German language also increased. In a response to Frau John Sch. of California in the May 1915 issue, the editors replied, “there will be many who shame the German language now who will later realize that they have vilified a delightful treasure.”³² Other exchanges with readers on the topic of the German language are also noteworthy. At the request of Frau O.R. of Illinois, the magazine printed a poem titled “Muttersprache” (Mother Tongue) which advocated for one’s native language.³³

In addition, in their responses to letters, the editorial staff often complimented readers’ German-language abilities. To Frau J.H.K. of Kansas in August 1915 they wrote, “by having followed the teachings of your parents in the German language, you now have a treasure that no one can take away from you.”³⁴ Other readers also received praise from the magazine for their abilities despite having been born in the U.S. In a reply to Frau B.B. of Texas, the editors responded: “it is seldom that a German born in America knows the native language so well as you.”³⁵ Frau J.W.P. received a similar response to her letter from the editors in February 1917, “that you were born here and can still write such a good letter in German is something to be really proud of.”³⁶ However, as Fraulein Clara S. of Washington found out in her reply from the magazine, when readers did not write in German, the editors were likewise quick to notice and encourage the use of German: “it was so nice to receive your letter, even if it was written in English. Would you like to write me a short letter in German? I know you can read and

³¹ “Zum neuen Jahrgang,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1914, 2.

³² Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 49.

³³ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1916, 49.

³⁴ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1915, 49.

³⁵ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1915, 49.

³⁶ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1917, 49.

understand German well since you were able to follow the instructions in German for the needlework.”³⁷ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* policed the linguistic boundaries of German communities in the U.S., in part to assure themselves a readership beyond first generation immigrants.

In their own letters to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, readers’ sentiments echoed the magazine’s view on the importance of the German language. In June 1916, Frau Margarethe St. of New Jersey encouraged the magazine to continue fighting for the preservation of the German language and other elements of heritage. She wrote, “may God bless you in your struggle for the great goal of maintaining the German language, traditions, and love for the Fatherland.”³⁸ Another reader, Frau R.G. of New Jersey, wrote to the magazine that although she had been in the U.S. since she was 5 years old, she preferred to read in German.³⁹

Even before the war *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* had actively promoted the use of the German language among its readers since they relied on German-language speakers and readers as their main market. However, in the context of the war, the magazine’s push for more German usage also became a way to show support for Germany while promoting a German identity among its readers. By promoting the German language, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and its readers hoped to encourage other German Americans to rediscover their German roots. Speaking the German language was presented as a means of helping to revive the German spirit in the U.S. and thus fuel support for Germany in the war. The magazine wanted readers to further recognize the irreplaceability and value of their native language and understand the severity of the threat that the war posed to its survival.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND MOTHERS IN MAINTAINING GERMANNES

³⁷ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1914, 49.

³⁸ Margarethe St., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, June 1916, 46.

³⁹ R.G., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1916, 48.

Linked very closely to the discussions about the immediate need to celebrate and maintain German culture and language in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, was rhetoric about the important role of women and mothers in this task and their children's compliance with such efforts. Many of the references made in the magazine on the topics of language and culture during the early war years discussed the responsibility of mothers to ensure their children spoke the language and felt connected to their Germanness. Indeed, other historians have pointed to the role German-American women played as the preservers of culture for their families and communities. In her work on 19th century German female immigrants in the Midwest, Linda Schelbitzki Pickle shows how German-American women served as the "conservators of culture and language" and preserved Old World traditions for their rural families. In addition, she argues that the German-language press realized women's roles in preserving culture and encouraged them to maintain connections to their heritage. Other historians like Birte Pflieger have also examined German-American women's role in "preserving ethnic identity" in German-American clubs and organizations.⁴⁰

The editors of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* felt very strongly that women served as secret weapons in combating the loss of Germanness they feared had already begun within German-American homes and in the larger German-American community. In an open letter to their readers in the September 1915 issue, the magazine celebrated German women and mothers:

German women stay German longer and stronger. It is them we have to thank when children also keep their Germanness. The sense of obligation and the awareness that one must do the right thing even when it brings no advantages, a child learns not at school or the playground but at home with family. They see how selfless the mother is... No one understands like the German woman and mother that victory is only possible with a fight... We wanted to recognize your merits and contributions and concede that nothing can happen to the German people as long as German women and mothers are in place.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Pickle, *Contented Among Strangers*, 85, 187; Pflieger, "Charity Before Government Welfare," 59.

⁴¹ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1915, 16-17.

Over a year later, on the occasion of a new volume year in October 1916, the magazine further applauded the efforts of the women and mothers who formed their readership: “our readership proves to us that German women will work tirelessly to stick together and it is clear from the many letters from our valuable readers how enthusiastically they support our efforts to maintain the German language in America.”⁴² Readers also expressed positive views about the importance of mothers. About her own deceased mother, Frau F.E. of Texas wrote: “her influence as a great true German woman lives on in the circle of her children, her grandchildren, and her great grandchildren.”⁴³ In another letter to the editor, a reader from California explained the wholesomeness that mothers and housewives represented: “how great are the words ‘deutsche Hausfrau’! They awaken such good memories - one is again at home where the mother is presiding over and the German character grows in our souls. The German spirit will recover once again.”⁴⁴

This recognition of the importance of German women and mothers illustrates the contributions that women were making to the pro-Germany movement in response to the war. While the magazine in some ways promoted traditional images of German mothers and wives, “at home with family,” preserving their families’ German identity, the war transformed these previously apolitical images.⁴⁵ Viewed as the protectors and warriors of the home front, the responsibilities of women and mothers as preservers of culture and language were perceived as equally instrumental to a German victory as the efforts of the German military. Although the responsibilities of instilling and maintaining the family’s sense of Germanness were based on traditional and maternal ideals that positioned women in the domestic sphere, these contributions

⁴² “Zum neuen Jahrgang,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1916, 2.

⁴³ F.E., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1916, 48.

⁴⁴ Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1916, 48.

⁴⁵ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1915, 16-17.

were still valued by women, the press, and the larger German-American community. While this important role in the home was different from the political voice many readers also exercised in the press, it was still viewed as active participation in the German-American community and in the discourse surrounding issues their community was facing. Furthermore, that readers used the press to mobilize other readers to preserve culture, rather than just staying quiet in the home, further extended their contributions and participation beyond the domestic and into the public sphere.

These examples from *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also point to the strength of German identity particularly among German-American women. The notion that “German women stay German longer and stronger” builds directly on the work of historians like Birte Pfleger and Russell A. Kazal who have also pointed out in their work on German organizations during World War I that women’s participation in pro-German initiatives rose during the war, rather than decline as it did in German-American men’s groups.⁴⁶ This suggests that German women did indeed stay truer to their Germanness longer and stronger and explains why German-American women were so valued as cultural preservers. Perhaps more than men, women recognized the threat the war posed to German heritage in the U.S. and rallied behind one another to defend it. In doing so, they achieved a great deal of influence and solidified their role as equal players in the German-American community.

How the children of German-American families participated in the efforts to preserve German culture and language was also visibly important to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. Especially prevalent in the “Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen” column of the magazine, the editors used this platform to urge German-American mothers to instill the importance of Germanness in their

⁴⁶ Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*, 8, 79-92; Pfleger, “Charity Before Government Welfare,” 61-62.

children at every opportunity. As early as the December 1914 issue, the magazine explained a potential silver lining to Germany being at war:

There is a something good that can come from this. It is bringing our children closer to us... We understand that many of them feel more American and we can't and shouldn't change that, but we would always like to see that they have more value for Germany and the German people. However, the current events are changing that as they see how Germany is portrayed in the English language press in America. Suddenly they realize that a great injustice is being done to the German people, to their parents, and even to them... They are realizing that it is ok to be proud of being a German descendant... We don't think that we can or should turn our children into German patriots, but we want to encourage them to have understanding, love, and awareness for their German culture and the current situation has made this easier.⁴⁷

In August of the following year, the editors modestly noted that the potential silver lining of the war – that the more Americanized children of German Americans would connect more with their German roots – had come to fruition:

Some may notice that they think more and more about their German roots these days... One notices this too with the children of German immigrants, most of which feel resentful due to the injustices inflicted on them by other Americans, and they are embracing their heritage now more than ever. We hear less from them about emphasizing Americanness, and only in some cases does there still seem to be the fear that their German heritage could bring them under suspicion as an American citizen... This gives us reason to be happy.⁴⁸

In the two examples above, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* took great pleasure in the notion that the war, and specifically widespread anti-German sentiment in the U.S., had inspired the children of German Americans to cling to their Germanness. Such a newfound sense of German pride among the children of German Americans was likely an ongoing goal of the German-American press in order to maintain steady readership numbers for future generations. Therefore, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* realized the advantages the war in Europe provided. Along with the reawakening of a pro-German spirit among German Americans across the U.S., Germany's involvement in the war was instrumental in helping them cultivate the next generation of readers,

⁴⁷ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 19.

⁴⁸ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1915, 16.

especially at a time when the future of German-America was a concern. As the war continued and the anti-German sentiment in the U.S. grew more intense, the fear of lost connections to Germanness appeared to grow stronger in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* such that the magazine became much firmer and unyielding in their belief that German-American children should be proud of their Germanness:

Now at least we can stand by the German Christmas tree, a symbol of German loyalty and sense of family and conclude that with tenacity we will hold on to our Germanness and more than ever make sure that our children are proud of their heritage and that they never forget what they owe their ancestors and the country of their ancestors.⁴⁹

That so much concern was directed toward German-American children could also hint at the fact that some children were indeed distancing themselves from their German born parents either because of the war, anti-German sentiment, or as an embrace of American society and culture. There is a sense of urgency in their rhetoric that suggests that the magazine was intent to hold on to the second- and third-generation German Americans as much as possible, even if that meant capitalizing on Germany being at war. Indeed, other historians have noted that the German-language press did in fact use the war “as a means of rallying the disintegrating ethnic community to united action.”⁵⁰

On the topic of the German language specifically in regard to children in German-American families, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* took an equally strong stance. In a response to a letter from Frau Karoline K. of Texas, the editors replied, “We are happy to hear about how you make the effort to teach your children German. I know you are busy farmer’s wife and that you use your little free time to teach them in German so that they won’t lose the native language is commendable.”⁵¹ A reply to Frau R.V. of Illinois reiterated the magazine’s views on the role of

⁴⁹ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1915, 15.

⁵⁰ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 95.

⁵¹ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, August 1915, 48.

parents in teaching their children German: “the German language at home is a problem for many here in America. The native language should not be neglected but the children also want to learn English accent free. Since the schools only cater to English, it is important for the parents to make sure they learn to speak German at home.”⁵²

Readers’ letters to the editor reveal that they too recognized their unique role as women and mothers in the preservation of culture and language and their responsibility in imparting elements of German heritage to their children. Several letters were sent in by readers, detailing the number of children that they had and proudly mentioning that they could all write, speak, and read German.⁵³ In her letter about her own children who could speak German, Frau M.S. of Washington added, “I have to say something about the German language. How often I hear the excuse: ‘the children don’t want to’! I think the children do indeed want to, if only the parents took it seriously. After all, who is in charge, the children or the parents?”⁵⁴ Several readers took even tougher approaches in expressing their conviction that children in German-American families should be taught German. In March 1915, Frau Henry H. of Wisconsin exclaimed, “one’s native language is worth gold! How often I encounter German families where the parents say my children cannot speak German, we speak only English. It is a great injustice.”⁵⁵ Another reader, Frau L.L. of Michigan, who had just moved to the U.S. expressed her shock at the amount of English being spoken among Germans: “I have only been here one year and I am ashamed of some of my fellow countrymen I have seen. It hurts me so much when I come out of church on Sundays and all around me left and right I hear only English being spoken – and not

⁵² Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, 50.

⁵³ See Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1915, May 1915, September 1915, October 1915, October 1916, and January 1917.

⁵⁴ M.S., Offener Sprechsaal, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1915, 44.

⁵⁵ Herr und Frau Henry H., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1915, 47.

just among the young, but also among the old who can hardly even speak English.”⁵⁶ Even more fiery, in her letter to the magazine in January 1917 about a girl who was afraid to speak German in public, a reader from Alabama blamed the girl’s mother:

A friend of mine told me that her eighteen-year-old daughter was in a store where two German women, who had just recently immigrated to the U.S., were having difficulty communicating with the store clerk. The mother asked her daughter, why didn’t you help the women - after all, you can speak English and German. The girl then answered: ‘I would not let them know that I am German, I am ashamed of it.’ And who is to blame for this, no one other than the mother herself. It is truly a disgrace when you visit German households here and the children are asked something in German and they answer in English and the parents let them get away with it. I would have punished my children hard if they had done something like that.⁵⁷

Such disapproval shared by readers over the lack of German-language skills in some German-American families sheds light on the various subgroups of German Americans that existed during World War I. Not all German Americans connected with a German cultural identity and therefore not all German Americans regularly used the German language, practiced German customs, communicated with relatives in Germany, or read the German-language press, etc. Indeed, historians of German-America have emphasized diversity within the German-American community. In his work on German Americans and World War I, Frederick Luebke examines these various groups and compares their experiences in World War I. As Luebke notes, the German ethnic group in the U.S. was quite diverse and each group, from the pro-German “cultural chauvinists” to the more neutral religious groups, differed greatly in how they publicly responded to the war and how they were treated by the American public. Furthermore, he adds that a common stereotype of German Americans, based only on the loudest and proudest pro-Germany voices in the press, wrongly assumed that all citizens of German origin unanimously

⁵⁶ L.L., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1916, 45.

⁵⁷ Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1917, 41.

supported Germany in the war and thus fueled the anti-German movement.⁵⁸ Such diversity within the German-American population explains why readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* may have differed in how seriously they took their role as cultural preservers, with some female readers judging other German-American women who were less strict about their children speaking German. *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and its readers, with their well-documented interest in and love for German politics, language, and people, were part of a subgroup of German Americans who were outspokenly and proudly pro-Germany. This suggests that readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* maintained especially deep connections to their German heritage and language and explains why they were particularly critical of others who did not. Indeed, as their comments in the magazine reveal, many readers felt called to preserve their families' ties to Germany through culture and language and took this responsibility very seriously.

This role of women and mothers in preserving culture and language is extremely significant. By viewing women as critical sustainers of German culture and language, the magazine assigned to its female readers a great deal of power and authority.” Women readers perceived the preservation of culture and language to be their duty, and not only embraced this responsibility but also took great pride in doing so. Also noteworthy, the maternal and traditional nature of this role as protector of culture and language was not viewed by the magazine and its readers as confining or restrictive. Rather, it was portrayed by the magazine as a way for women to actively support Germany during the war. While the last chapter showed how war motivated women to enter the political world of politics and war—a world traditionally dominated men—this chapter suggests that women continued to see their roles as wives and mothers in the domestic realm as equally important to winning the war, since it was there where women perpetuated and protected German culture, language, and kin networks. Furthermore, that they

⁵⁸ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 88-89.

used the press to encourage other German-American women to rally around German culture and language reveals how women themselves used the press to create, participate in, and even police a very public community of German readers and their families. This merging of the domestic and public sphere and their involvement in their communities reflects the work of historians like Donna Gabaccia and Vicki Ruiz whose work together on immigrant women focuses on how women's activism in the press bridged "private and public worlds."⁵⁹

HOMELAND

As part of the enduring connections to German heritage promoted by *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, another common theme found in the pages of the magazine during the period of American neutrality was nostalgia for the old homeland and "Fatherland." References to happy memories of Germany and a longing for their past in the old homeland consistently appeared in letters from readers. Women's sentiments about the homeland were framed in a variety of contexts including love, intensified feelings of attachment to Germany because of the war, and an enduring, unbreakable connection to the place of their childhood.

Outpourings of love for the homeland were among the most common statements. In an open letter to their readers in December 1914, the editors of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* exclaimed "our love for our dear old Fatherland can never die."⁶⁰ In an open letter to their readers on the occasion of the new volume year in 1914, the editors commended readers for sharing these same feelings towards the "Fatherland": "It is apparent from every letter that there are feelings in the hearts of our readers that will always convey love and loyalty to the country of our fathers."⁶¹ A similar response to Frau Marie P. of Arkansas underscores the lasting nature of this love that was

⁵⁹ Gabaccia and Ruiz, "Migrations and Destinations," 8.

⁶⁰ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, December 1914, 19.

⁶¹ "Zum neuen Jahrgang," *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, October 1914, 2.

especially praiseworthy to the magazine's editors: "in every letter that we receive it is clear how many of our readers here in the new land still have so much love for the Fatherland."⁶² Another letter that appeared in the May 1915 issue further demonstrates the steadfastness of readers in their commitment to their German homeland. In response to Frau Elizabeth B. of Kentucky the letter exclaimed: "Your enthusiastic letter shows how true you still are to the old homeland, although you have lived here nearly 50 years! Yes, we Germans stay true even when we're so far away from the old Fatherland."⁶³ Readers also shared in giving such praise to other readers. In July 1915 Frau A.F. Kr. of Oklahoma acknowledged her fellow readers: "it made me so happy to see in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* how German hearts in this country also still beat strongly with true love for the old Fatherland."⁶⁴ Such expressions of love for the homeland provided a way for women to maintain a strong German identity despite pressures to assimilate during World War I.

Also striking among the letters from readers, is that many readers maintained their love for the homeland even when they had been living in the U.S. for many years. Readers often explained in their letters that the homeland was still special to them even though it had been quite some time since they had lived there. In a letter to the magazine in July 1915 Frau Betty B. of Ohio wrote, "although I have been in America for several years, my heart still belongs to the old homeland."⁶⁵ Frau E.K. of Nebraska also shared a similar sense of nostalgia in a letter to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*: "your interesting articles bring me back to my youth and give me tears of homesickness for my home... that we left 32 years ago."⁶⁶ The responses from the editorial team to individual readers' letters, also underscore the longevity of ties to homeland. As early as September 1914, in a response to Frau I.F. of California, the editors replied "even though you

⁶² Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1915, 49.

⁶³ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 46.

⁶⁴ A.F. Kr., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1915, 44.

⁶⁵ Betty B., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1915, 44.

⁶⁶ E.K., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, January 1915, 46.

have been here in this country since 1876, you are certainly still emotionally attached to the Fatherland with love.”⁶⁷ Similarly, to Frau A.H. of New York, they wrote “although you’ve been here for 35 years your heart still beats with such love for the old homeland. Hopefully you continue to receive good news from your 5 nephews on the front.”⁶⁸ In addition to their responses to readers’ letters, the editors also stressed the resilience of attachments to homeland in their open letters to their readers. In one such letter in the May 1915 issue, the editors declared: “the Germans living here, whether they became American citizens or not, kept their burning love for the Fatherland and would do anything to help it if it were in danger. They don’t need any special recognition, as they consider it normal and natural and not worthy of any special praise.”⁶⁹

That readers often expressed such connections to Germany even though they had been living in the U.S. for several years, demonstrates the transnational quality of German immigrants’ lives. Rather than lose or abandon ties to their homeland, women readers and the magazine reveal a community very much connected to the country they left behind. Furthermore, that many readers expressed connections to the German homeland despite being born in the U.S. as second- or third-generation German Americans explains the significance and permanence that heritage represented in their support for Germany. This is important to this study of German Americans and the retention of German identity because it shows that many foreign-born people living in the U.S., as well as their children, did not shed the ties to their ethnicities as quickly and as effortlessly as promoted by some sociologists of the Americanization movement during this time.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1914, 49.

⁶⁸ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, February 1916, 50.

⁶⁹ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 16.

⁷⁰ Howard C. Hill, “The Americanization Movement,” *American Journal of Sociology* 24, no. 6 (May 1919).

The war and the danger it posed to Germany sparked much of this outpouring. The magazine was full of references to a reawakened and intensified connection that readers felt with their homeland because of the war. In an open letter to their readers in November 1915, the editors of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* described how the war and the threat to Germanness in the U.S. was affecting readers' ties to the homeland:

Most of us had probably reached the point where we thought we had overcome our homesickness. That was the case as long as everything was going well and people greeted us with politeness and respect. Then there came a point that brought back all of the connections to the place of our childhood. Germany was in danger, shamelessly attacked without reason by forces outnumbering them – that was enough to make all hearts beat faster and remember, even those that had lived as an American for many years, what type of blood runs through our veins and where we learned to babble as babies.⁷¹

As this example from the magazine explains, the war prompted a cultural reawakening among some German Americans who articulated their readiness to defend German culture. After immigrating to the U.S. and growing more comfortable in the new homeland over time, some German Americans relaxed their ties to Germany and allowed them to lie dormant. However, as the writer alludes, the sudden disruption to their contentment and complacency in the U.S. via anti-German sentiment and the reality of Germany at war evoked these latent connections to their old homeland. Another open letter in the March 1916 issue also discussed how the war “awakened” among Germans a desire not to relinquish their community ties but to cling “tighter to one another.” The letter explained, “Every hostility we encounter makes our attachment to the old homeland grow stronger. That goes not only for those that emigrated here but also for their children and their children.” The letter even ended with a not-so-veiled threat: “The enemies of German Americans should consider it three times before they begin with their wickedness if they don’t want to provoke a fight that will only damage the country and the people.”⁷² That

⁷¹ Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, November 1915, 17.

⁷² Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1916, 15.

Germany's involvement in a war could trigger an intense reaction among, and even threat by, German-American women speaks to the underlying connections to German heritage that readers already possessed. The sudden threat to their homeland and to their German-American community was the catalyst that sparked renewed attachments to their homeland. As in the example above, the perception of being under attack by their fellow Americans created an "us vs. them" mentality that had a unifying effect on German Americans causing them to band together under their collective experiences of anti-German discrimination and shared protective feelings about Germany. Echoing these sentiments, in a letter to the editor Frau Marie Sch. of Indiana also commented directly on how the war was deepening her attachment to the homeland: "I think everyone that loves the old homeland has a heart that beats faster and harder in these troubled times, because in every moment one must think about our Fatherland."⁷³ Historian Frederick Luebke also noted the enthusiasm with which German Americans rallied to Germany's cause during the early years of the war. In his book *Bonds of Loyalty*, he argues that "the sound of distant guns produced new levels of cooperation and institutional vigor" among some German-American groups and that German-language newspapers and other German organizations "experienced a surge of new interest."⁷⁴

Homeland as a symbol of one's origin, childhood, youth, and roots is another way the term was used by the magazine and its readers to express support for Germany. The importance of maintaining enduring connections to this symbolic place was evident in the magazine's responses to their readers' letters. In a reply to Frau C.M.W. of Wisconsin in April 1915, the editors agreed with her on the importance of one's childhood home: "Yes, when one leaves their old homeland in their youth, the memories are very important and stay with us forever and

⁷³ Marie Sch., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 42.

⁷⁴ Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 95.

nothing seems so beautiful and blissful as the places where we spent our childhood.”⁷⁵ The lasting and permanent nature of such connections was also clear in readers’ letters to the magazine. In March 1916, Frau Geo. B. of Illinois explained the longevity and resilience with which such connections endured. She wrote, “in spite of any love for our newly chosen homeland, our adoration for our old homeland where our cradle stood does not waver.”⁷⁶ These sentiments were often expressed in direct relation to the war as well. In May 1915, Dorothea G. of South Dakota wrote:

I am sixty years old and have been in America for thirteen years but when one sees the pictures of their old homeland they feel young again. Unfortunately, our dear Fatherland is surrounded by enemies at the moment. I just received a letter from my siblings, whose sons are fighting in the war. They pray that the Lord will help with a victory. I also pray daily for that.⁷⁷

On the surface, the concept of homeland was used by the editors and readers to signify an innate connection to one’s place of birth (or their parents’ birth) and the country of their ancestors. However, their passion for the homeland reveals that this “place” held a deeper significance in maintaining their ties to Germany. Unlike the more abstract concepts of culture and language, the homeland represented something visible and tangible that could evoke sentimental and nostalgic memories. Thus, “homeland” as a place was important to them because it also embodied all other connections to heritage such as culture, language, and people and served as a unifying symbol that connected these German-American women to their Germanness, especially those born in Germany. Therefore, more than just a country of citizenship or place of birth, the “homeland” was symbolic of associations to all other facets of their ethnic and cultural identity. Also noteworthy, expressions of support for Germany in the war were often constructed in terms of supporting “the homeland,” not necessarily “Germany,”

⁷⁵ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1915, 51.

⁷⁶ Geo. B., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1916, 48.

⁷⁷ Dorothea G., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1915, 42.

although it is certainly clear that they were referring to the German empire. In constructing their support for the “homeland” rather than “Germany,” they reveal what was actually at stake for them – not necessarily the German empire, but connections to their German roots. This cultural sense of belonging and inclusion with the old homeland rather than to Germany as a nation-state further illustrates the strength of readers’ German identity, especially as it pertained to aspects of heritage.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF READERS’ LETTERS: IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, ACTIVISM

These examples of the pro-German sentiments expressed in the content of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and readers’ letters to the magazine illustrate the enduring and even strengthened connections to German heritage that many German Americans emphasized during the early years of World War I. Whereas the magazine had always been connected to topics of Germanness because of its status as a popular German-language publication in the U.S., the prevalence and passion with which the magazine and readers increasingly discussed ties to their culture, language, and homeland after the war began in Europe is noteworthy. It is clear from their words that these deep-seated connections to their German roots were profoundly influential in framing their support for Germany.

This analysis of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* is important for a number of reasons. First, the magazine and readers’ letters illuminate the strength of German cultural identity in the U.S. during this time, especially among women. While some scholars have argued that German Americans had all but faded into American mainstream culture by the eve of World War I, the sentiments expressed in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* suggest otherwise.⁷⁸ Furthermore, that many of these German-American women desired to not just retain, but also celebrate their German

⁷⁸ For example, Connolly-Smith, *Translating America*, 14.

culture, language, and homeland despite having been in the U.S. for several years or having been born in the U.S. reiterates that not all immigrant groups assimilated rapidly and irreversibly into American culture, even under threat of war and discrimination. The majority of readers who wrote letters to the editor did not hold these attachments to Germany because they had just recently emigrated from Germany or still considered themselves to be political citizens of Germany, but rather because they valued the connections and familial ties they felt to their German heritage. In this sense, feelings of pro-German nationalism were not based on German citizenship or a political sense of belonging to Germany, since many had not lived in Germany for years, but rather on the more personal associations to their German culture, language, and homeland. A testament to the resiliency and strength of German-American identity, the letters from readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* convey the importance that homeland, language, and culture had within immigrant families and their descendants in America.

These underlying attachments to Germany were present among many German Americans before the war, but it was the war itself and anti-German sentiment that drew them out of German Americans with such enthusiasm. Such findings mirror the work of other scholars like Carl Wittke who have examined German identity in the U.S. in relation to World War I. Wittke noted the significance of the war on issues of incorporation and identity, writing, “The World War revealed that the American people had not been completely fused by the process of amalgamation and Americanization into a homogeneous mass, strong enough to resist the reactions produced by a European war which involved so many of the racial and national groups resident in the United States.”⁷⁹ As the content of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and the letters from its readers demonstrate, many German women in the U.S. expressed an enduring devotion and

⁷⁹ Wittke, *German Americans and World War I*, 22.

commitment to their culture, language, and homeland, a devotion strengthened by Germany's entrance into World War I.

That German-American women as mothers were especially driven to maintain connections to culture and language for the sake of their children speaks to the strong display of German identity conveyed by German-American women, in particular. Indeed, the role of German-American women as protectors of culture and language represents a second observation about the importance of readers' letters. Perhaps more than men, women recognized the threat the war posed to their German heritage and rallied behind one another to defend it. As the magazine and its readers readily conveyed in their rhetoric, many German-American women took on the responsibility of primary protector and promoter of German language and culture within their families and communities, as well as the sustainer of relationships with friends and family members still in Germany. Other historians of German-American women have noted this role as well. Linda Schelbitzki Pickle argues that German immigrants in rural areas of the US during the 19th century acted as the "conservators of culture and language" and therefore helped to maintain and recreate a sense of Old World comforts for their families and communities in the new homeland. Furthermore, she contends that the German-American press realized women's roles in preserving culture and further encouraged them to maintain their connections to their German heritage.⁸⁰ Likewise, Christiane Harzig has examined the role German-American women played in forming and maintaining relationships within and to their larger communities.⁸¹ Birte Pflieger and Russell Kazal have also studied German-American women's role of "preserving ethnic identity" in women's auxiliary groups, while arguing that the participation of German-

⁸⁰ Pickle, *Contented Among Strangers*, 85, 187.

⁸¹ Harzig, *Familie, Arbeit und weibliche Öffentlichkeit in einer Einwanderungsstadt*.

American women such groups rose during the war, while German-American men's group experienced a decline.⁸²

Like the political views they expressed as active members of the German-American community, these tasks of preserving connections to German culture, language, communities, and family members for the benefit of posterity also demonstrates women's inclusion in and contribution to the larger German-American community, even if it was more maternal and traditional in nature. In this sense, although their views on the war and its politics afforded them involvement and an active voice in the community outside of their domestic world, their domestic role of nurturing their children's ties to their German heritage was also viewed by them as relevant to the cause and important to their support for Germany in the war. This builds on the work of historians like Maxine Seller, who contends that women were indeed active, contributing members of their larger immigrant communities.⁸³ Female readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* did not view their role as the sustainer of German culture, language, and family as being relegated to a domestic world exclusively, but rather as another way in which they could and did contribute to their German-American community as engaged and active members. In essence, both ends of the spectrum – a public, political voice and a traditional, private, domestic duty – were viewed as equally important to the pro-German cause and to their participation in their community. Furthermore, readers' use of the press to maintain connections to elements of their Germanness, including family members and other women in Germany, demonstrates the transnational nature of their participation in their community. This reflects the work of Carl

⁸² Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*, 8, 79-92; Pflieger, "Charity Before Government Welfare," 61-62.

⁸³ Seller, "Beyond the Stereotype," 59-70.

Wittke on the German-American press, who also noted that it was an important tool for maintaining transatlantic connections.⁸⁴

A third and related observation about the importance of readers' letters to the editor underscores the significance of the letters themselves and the function of the German-American press in preserving ties to heritage. As a widespread German-language publication that reached all corners of the U.S. and even Germany, the letter-writing function of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* allowed readers to share their support for Germany and devotion to their German heritage with other like-minded German-American women around the country. This virtual community of German-American female readers created within the pages of the magazine served as a trusted space in which readers could share their questions and opinions, but more importantly, where they could channel their collective devotion to Germany and their heritage - the culture, people, language, and homeland. Until war-time legislation made it impossible, the German-American press proved to be an invaluable resource to immigrants and their descendants as it linked together those interested in retaining even basic aspects of their German heritage. Furthermore, through the various columns and forums, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* and its readers used the press to mobilize other women to the pro-Germany cause. Rather than expressing their pro-German views and support of German heritage only within the quiet confines of their homes, readers of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* took to the press to express themselves, thus extending their private, domestic world to the public.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, 1-8.

⁸⁵ As other historians such as Gabaccia and Ruiz have shown, women's use of the press in this way helped to bridge their private and public worlds, "Migrations and Destinations," 8.

CHAPTER 4

“A MAGAZINE THROUGH WHICH I CAN STRENGTHEN MYSELF”: GERMAN-AMERICAN WOMEN, THEIR PRESS, AND THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I

INTRODUCTION

Don't be sorry that you had to raise the price of the subscription because of rising paper costs. I'd be happy to pay any price for it. In these times it is just extra nice to have such a magazine through which I can strengthen myself.¹

- Frau C.M., March 1918

When the U.S. officially joined the “Great War” in April 1917, the German-American press was on the cusp of a fundamental transformation in its audience, content, and tone. The long and robust tenure it had enjoyed since the 1700's as a steadfast fixture of thriving German-American communities across the U.S. was coming to a close, as Germany and anything associated with it - like the language and press - became the official enemy. Indeed, change had been looming for several months prior to April 1917 as tensions between Germany and the U.S. had grown worse with the sinking of U.S. merchant ships by German submarines.

This mounting friction, which culminated in the entry of the U.S. in the war, had dire consequences for the German-American press. Both the government and the American public regarded the German-American press as one of the main vehicles for displaying disloyal and anti-American views. Therefore, legislative controls were implemented to curtail the German-language press from spreading anything that could be considered pro-German propaganda. The first of such policies, the Espionage Act, was passed in June 1917 and made it illegal to send through the mail any material that supported treason or insurrection. By October 1917, the Trading with the Enemy Act required all foreign-language papers to submit English translations

¹ C.M., Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, March 1918, 48.

of any article that concerned the war or the U.S. to the postmaster general for approval before it could be printed. This proved costly to the German-American press as printing was delayed while waiting for translations to be approved. Then in May 1918, the final blow to the German-language press was dealt with the passing of the Sedition Act, an amendment to the Espionage Act. Under this law, it became a crime to “willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language” about the U.S. and its government, constitution, or military. It also made it illegal to advocate the success of the enemy or to support a reduction in the production of war time supplies.² As a result of these limitations, the beloved German-American press, which had been so important to German Americans in the earlier years of the war due to its well-known support of Germany, had two options: either end their publications or undergo a major shift in tone and rhetoric in favor of more American-friendly prose. Meanwhile, readership numbers declined as articles that had been about Germany and the German military suddenly changed focus to the U.S. and its forces. Ultimately, many publications did not survive the change; of the more than five hundred German-language papers that existed before the start of the war, around half of them had ceased publication by the end.³ Luckily *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* fared better than many other German-language papers in that it was able to survive the war years with relevantly high readership numbers.⁴

However, the entry of the U.S. in the war and the resulting restrictions on the German-language press naturally led to a reduction in the displays of German identity and transnational connections that had characterized *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* during the early years of the war. As the previous two chapters have explored, prior to the U.S. officially joining the war, *Die*

² Dewitt, “Espionage and Sedition Act,” 319-320; Conolly-Smith, *Translating America*, 2, 250; and Wittke, *German-Language Press in America*, 270-271.

³ Park, *Immigrant Press and Its Control*, 319.

⁴ Arndt and Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals*, 676.

Deutsche Hausfrau had been filled with articles, columns, images, and letters from readers supporting Germany and its military, people, language, and culture. The magazine's pro-German political rhetoric, transnational appeal, and promotion of German culture and heritage within the German community in the U.S. had made it a valuable medium through which German-American women expressed themselves. With its overt pro-German stance, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* had promoted and cultivated a strong sense of German identity in its readers that reflected both a cultural and political sense of belonging and inclusion. In their letters to the editor, readers indicated that they continued to feel connected to their Germanness, despite the anti-German movement that had been gaining ground in the U.S. In addition, readers benefitted from the magazine in that they actively participated in the dialogue about the war that was taking place in their local and transnational German communities. Readers' letters show that they readily engaged in and contributed to the political and cultural issues affecting the larger German-American population, whether they were related to the traditionally male-dominated topics of war and politics or the more maternal concerns of maintaining the German language and culture for their children on the home front. Therefore, their use of the press to express themselves and mobilize other readers, the transnational nature of the magazine, and the politicization of the home had allowed readers to merge their domestic and public worlds.

The magazine was not immune to the sweeping shift towards more pro-American sentiments in content that befell the German-American press more generally starting in April 1917. Articles and regular columns that had been exclusively about Germany and Germans before U.S. entry were replaced with ones focused almost entirely on the U.S., making the magazine almost unrecognizable from its earlier issues in terms of rhetoric. However, despite this monumental change from the earlier war-time issues, the female perspective of the

publication endured. Even as the magazine and its readers shifted their focus to the point of view of the U.S. in the war, the important role of women during wartime in both the public and domestic spheres and their contributions to the issues affecting their community remained constant. This continuity of the female perspective occurred against the backdrop of the larger women's suffrage movement in the U.S. and suggests that women's newfound wartime role promoted in the *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* helped inspire and prepare German-American women to accept their place in a more progressive 20th century.

TRANSITIONING FROM GERMAN TO AMERICAN LOYALTIES

The most conspicuous change to *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* after the spring of 1917 can be seen in the decidedly pro-American content and coverage of the magazine. Due to the legal restrictions placed on the German-language press, the tone and rhetoric of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* became noticeably different. Just as it had undergone a major shift in focus when Germany went to war in 1914, the magazine shifted yet again in 1917, reversing its direction towards a more American friendly audience. Indeed, there were very few references at all to Germany or its culture after the spring of 1917 and the intense promotion of Germanness and German identity were no longer visible. One area where the absence of pro-German rhetoric was immediately observable was in the "Illustrierte Chronik der Zeit" news column. Here, the magazine still covered topics related to war and politics, but it was now focused on the U.S. instead of Germany. Beginning in late spring 1917, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* began reporting on the U.S.'s financial, logistical, and political preparations for war. After the U.S. officially joined the war, the magazine began covering topics related to the U.S. military and its soldiers. In addition to the news segment, other articles about American soldiers and warfare were published

on topics such as how soldiers lived in the military camps and the activities of the American Red Cross and other aid organizations.⁵ Pictures of American troops were especially striking; images showed, for example, American troops arriving in Paris and being celebrated, and U.S. soldiers at the base camp in the Great Lakes standing together to spell out the word “America.”⁶ The editorial column “Plauderei mit unseren Leserinnen” also reflected this shift away from topics related to Germany. Instead of the staunch support for Germany and its culture, language, and people that previously characterized this section, the editors became more generic in their commentary beginning in 1917 and favored modest, neutral, inspirational reflections and musings about life in general. However, the underlying messages of the essays suggest that they may have been still referencing the war indirectly; common themes included how one must learn to accept change, move forward, and concentrate on the good things in life. In April 1918, for example, the editors used the month of April as a metaphor to reflect on how sometimes it rains and sometimes the sun shines, with obvious references to wartime vicissitudes in feelings. Similarly, the following month the editors encouraged readers to look at the month of May as a time for freshness, variety, and how they could recycle old memories to invigorate themselves. Indeed, because the magazine could no longer publish overt, fiery prose defending Germany and its military, people, and language, the essays became very metaphorical and neutral.

At best, the editors occasionally referred to embracing one’s sense of American pride while also maintaining a loose connection to German roots, especially in the “Briefkasten der Redaktion” section where editors responded to readers by name. As early as April 1917, the editors replied to Frau A.P.U. of Michigan, “yes, it is perfectly ok to cling to your love for the old homeland and have affection for your local country. Indeed, it has given us a new homeland

⁵ Felix J. Koch, “Wie unsere Soldaten im Feldlager leben,” *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, June 1918, 9; November 1918; “Unsere Soldaten im Felde,” *Die Hausfrau*, November 1918, 28.

⁶ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1917, 11; March 1918, 11; October 1918, 7.

and many good things.”⁷ A few months later in July 1917, editors responded similarly to Frau John J. of Nebraska, “your comment is right. This land has given all immigrants of all nationalities bread and in many cases wealth. For that we must honor all of the stars and stripes. However, we can still hold the old homeland in our hearts.”⁸ Such responses to readers suggests that readers were struggling with how to remain connected with their German roots while also showing pride in their American identity. The editors encouraged their readers to see the good things that the new homeland had provided them like access to basic needs, opportunities for success, and a place to call home. Moreover, the magazine sought to simultaneously validate connections readers still had to Germany, but it did so delicately so as not to appear overly supportive of the old homeland.

Despite these occasional references to embracing the U.S. as their new home while maintaining an internal connection to Germany, the magazine as a whole became markedly pro-American. Beginning in October 1918, the magazine dropped the word “deutsche” (German) from its title and began publication as just *Die Hausfrau*. Furthermore, many of its featured pieces were quite patriotic for the U.S. by the spring of 1917. In May 1917, the magazine published the words of “The Star-Spangled Banner” in English with an image of two American flags.⁹ Advertisements for donations to Germany were replaced by advertisements for the sale of liberty bonds. At the bottom of some of these ads, the magazine included a pro-American endorsement: “this page dedicated as a contribution to the winning of the war by ‘Die Hausfrau’ Milwaukee, Wisconsin.”¹⁰ Other examples of pro-American content include the pieces on travel, history, culture, and geography. These types of articles, which had previously been about

⁷ Briefkastern der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, April 1917, 50.

⁸ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1917, 50.

⁹ *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, May 1917, 10.

¹⁰ *Die Hausfrau*, October 1918, 51.

Germany or other German-speaking countries, became exclusively about the U.S. Even as early as January 1917, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* began featuring a monthly series on the American Civil War, with each issue detailing one of the major battles or events of the war. By the summer of 1917, articles on popular travel destinations or geographic points of interest within the U.S. appeared monthly, replacing the articles that had been on German cities and towns. In response to Frau August F. in July 1917, the magazine even replied “we’re glad you like the recent travel articles because we’re now going to be focusing exclusively on the U.S.”¹¹

This newfound emphasis on American interests had far-reaching implications for the promotion of Germanness and German identity on which the magazine had previously focused. Except for the fact that it was still printed in the German language, very few references to Germany, Germans, and German heritage were present. The restrictions put on the German-American press make it hard to know exactly how German-American readers felt about this shift from the ardent pro-German rhetoric to more neutral or more American friendly rhetoric; any continued support for Germany would not have been publishable. Therefore, perhaps one of the most interesting changes to the magazine after 1917 was a noticeable reduction in the number of published letters from readers. Whereas the “Stimmen aus dem Leserkreise” section of the magazine had been a few pages in length and contained several letters during the earlier years of the war prior to U.S. involvement, beginning in the spring of 1917 this section often appeared as only a half-page with as little as two letters from readers that had nothing at all to do with the war. The letters that did appear all praised *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* as being a magazine they could not live without, but they were less opinionated on topics and themes related to war. The exact reason for the lack of letters from readers remains unclear. One possible explanation is that there was a genuine decline in readers’ desire to send in letters to the editor. Perhaps there simply

¹¹ Briefkasten der Redaktion, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, July 1917, 50.

were not as many women writing to the magazine after 1917 because they either had less interest in German affairs or because they knew the publication could not accept or publish pro-German letters. Another potential explanation is editorial discretion. In this case, because of the new laws, the editor may have had to either omit letters that continued to show support for Germany or because of personal feelings they chose not to include letters that showed support for the U.S. Regardless of the reason, the lack of letters from readers on the subject of politics and Germanness make it hard to know readers' position on the war or how they felt about being German American as the two countries fought each other. However, with the U.S. entry in the war, these women's own sons, husbands, brothers, etc., were now fighting against relatives and other Germans with whom they had previously sympathized and maintained transnational connections. Therefore, this was likely a very complex event for German-American women as they grappled with their German-American identity and allegiances to both the old and new homeland. The war therefore played a significant role in the decline of German-America and German-American identity.

THE CONTINUED CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMMUNITY AND MERGING OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC WORLDS

Despite the significant change from the magazine's focus on Germany to the U.S., other aspects of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* remained constant. As in the issues from the earlier years of the war, the magazine continued to highlight women's contributions to their communities. One area where this was most notable was in the reporting on women's direct role in the war effort. Articles about American women and jobs appeared as early as May 1917 and also later featured topics like women in government work. Pictures of women being active for the war were also

especially common - in August 1917 and January 1918 the magazine featured pictures of women doing “men’s jobs” such as a police officer, butcher, barber, bag carrier at train station, and window washer. Other pictures of women featured in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* included women packing care packages for American soldiers on the front, the first female mail carrier delivering mail in Washington, and women sewing socks in factories for soldiers and women’s work for the Red Cross. The cover of the September 1918 issue, in fact, featured a picture of a Red Cross nurse. Some advertisements from the government which were featured in the magazine were direct in their call to the “Women of America” – “You are also being called to serve! The government needs you too and is giving you a great opportunity to fight. Sign up to be a nurse reserve.”¹²

Another area in which the magazine underscored women’s roles in their communities was their responsibility to make changes to food purchases and consumption habits in support of the American war effort. The magazine often published public service announcements about usage of certain commodities like sugar that the government was sending abroad to the troops. Other messages included instructions from the Red Cross on how to sew socks for American soldiers and how to use home gardens as appropriately as possible. Articles about cooking during wartime and how to save and be frugal also appeared. In addition to changes to food consumption, advertisements to buy liberty bonds written in both English and German were frequently included in the issues with sayings like “Prove that you are 100% American!” and “to those of you that came here and have adopted it has your fatherland...it is now your turn to pay back your new land.” As in the issues prior to U.S. entry, readers also had the opportunity to purchase patriotic war memorabilia and collectible items that supported the U.S. Readers could also receive items as free gifts with subscription renewals such as a patriotic pillow pattern featuring a Red Cross nurse

¹² *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*, September 1918, 51.

with two soldiers and American flags that read “From the girls they left behind.” Other examples of free gifts included pro-American patriotic embroidered and hand stitched items with an image of the American flag and the phrase “The Flag that preserves for all mankind the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Readers could also receive a photo frame with an American eagle carrying an American flag and a cutout for a face with the saying “Serving His Country.” As was the case with the earlier war issues, the purchasing, displaying, and consumption of food and household goods – all aspects considered part of women’s traditional purview as wives and mothers in the domestic sphere – continued to be politicized by *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. It was the perceived duty of women to make necessary changes to the consumption of goods in their households and was viewed as a way women could make an important contribution to the war effort. In this, the wartime content in *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* came to parallel in many ways messages about women’s wartime contributions and obligations directed at Anglo-American women.¹³

In addition, similar to the earlier war years, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* underscored the sacrifices women were forced to make due to the war in their relationships with family members. The burden on women of worrying about loved ones in the war was a subject the magazine increasingly emphasized as the war went on. Many letters of consolation from the editors to readers about the loss of husbands, brothers, sons, and nephews appeared in the “Briefkasten der Redaktion” section of the magazine. For example, in a response to Frau Ben. F. M. in August 1917, the editors wrote, “to have already lost three uncles and ten cousins because of the war and your only brother missing! Such sadness and pain you’ve had to go through dear friend. Indeed,

¹³ Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

many have heavy crosses to carry these days.” Similarly in February 1918, the editors responded to Frau Sophie M. of Illinois “with three sons in the Army, your heart must be full of worry about your kids, like many of our other readers. But like you said, we must do our duty and hope for the best.” Such sentiments convey the perceived female duty of sacrifice for one’s country as way of contributing to the war effort.

By showcasing these various ways in which women remained active and contributed to their communities, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* continued to celebrate women as the backbone of society. This reveals that even when the emphasis was no longer on supporting Germany, women still contributed to their communities in both public and domestic ways. Ultimately, due to the restrictions placed on the foreign-language press and the resulting retreat from references to connections with German women and relatives, any involvement women may have still had in their transnational community was absent from the pages of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*. However, the role women played in supporting Germans and Germany in the war was replaced by their support and activism for the U.S. This is significant because it demonstrates that even when German-American women no longer publicly promoted Germany and its language and culture in the press, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* continued to focus on women’s new wartime roles brought on by their contributions. The active roles they had claimed in their communities were not just important when it was Germany they were supporting, but remained important even when allegiances shifted to U.S. interests.

This celebration of women’s contributions to their communities during the war is also noteworthy due to its coincidence with the larger women’s suffrage movement that had gained momentum in the U.S. in 1917 and 1918. *Die Deutsche Hausfrau*’s focus on the ways in which women contributed to society by doing the work of men during war time reflected the

progressive spirit women across the U.S. were campaigning for as they sought the right to vote.¹⁴ In response, readers praised the magazine and emphasized the value of having their own women's press. As in the opening example from Frau C. M. of California, readers appreciated the magazine for its unique female perspective. Although, there were indeed fewer letters published during the last two years of the war, most of the letters that do appear all praise *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* as being a magazine they could not live without.

Perhaps most importantly, as was the case before U.S. entry in the war, *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* continued to merge women's private and public worlds throughout the last years of the war. Even when they were no longer about Germany, the magazine continued to provide readers with articles and information beyond the traditional female topics of cooking and fashion to keep them informed about the war and politics, topics that were traditionally considered beyond the purview of women's domestic concerns. Moreover, many of their articles promoted the increasingly public role of women during wartime and their contributions to their communities and the war effort. Although the letters from readers after the spring of 1917 are less outspoken on war, they nonetheless illustrate strong opinions about readers' love for the magazine and the outlet it provided beyond the domestic world. In addition, through the continued politicization of the domestic sphere – the purchasing, displaying, and consumption of pro-American household goods – *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* also served to merge readers' private and public worlds. Collectively, these characteristics of *Die Deutsche Hausfrau* illustrate a sustained progression of women into the public sphere that was reflective of the larger women's movement in society at that time.¹⁵ Thus, although reader's sense of Germanness, German identity, and transnational ties to Germans and Germany were sacrificed in the issues after the U.S. joined the war due to the

¹⁴ Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva*.

legislative restrictions placed on the press, these aspects of the magazine were replaced by increased attention given to the role of women in society and their contributions to their communities. For their part, readers continued to express their appreciation for the magazine and its role as a medium just for them, mirroring the increasingly public and progressive role of women in a changing U.S. society.

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