It's the manly virtues of the redskins which are exemplary to us! Courage, relentlessness, loyalty, and self-restraint were their prime laws. These are the traits toward which we young ones strive.


For a period of well over a hundred years, German children have played “Cowboys and Indians.” While a few have preferred the role of the cowboy because, referring to historical events, they did not want to impersonate a loser and victim, many children have reveled in the role of the Indian. This German fascination with Native Americans is reflected not only in child’s play, but also in countless novels, Wild West shows, hobby clubs, and even the number of works on Native American topics in German academia. Most historical German depictions of Native Americans suggest a German familiarity with Indian features and customs, as well as similarities between German and Native American character traits. As in the above quote, authors often recognized the German in Indians, or found Indian features when looking at their fellow Germans, or declared presumed features of Indianness to be admirable and worthy of emulation. The Indian other always seemed to resonate in the German self. Thus, the much-cited German fascination with, and fantasies about, Indians are expressions of the German quest for, and struggle with, the self.

Ever since German people learned of the existence of indigenous cultures in the New World, they, as much as other Europeans, tried to understand and explain these cultures by comparing them in a self-centered way to their own. Over time, Germans developed a sense of uniqueness in their comparisons with Native Americans and their reflections on German-Native relationships. This notion is part of the European perception of Native Americans, but it makes the German perception distinct from the perceptions of Native Americans in other European countries, especially the former colonial powers. Within German society, the repercussions of this self-centered comparison have differed among Ger-

Notes from this chapter begin on page 20.
Fellow Tribesmen

man observers, commentators, philosophers, and writers, and they have changed over time as Germans’ self-perception and their cultural surroundings developed. From the early colonial encounters to this day, the perception of Native Americans has reflected problems, fears, longings, and struggles in German society. That is, images Germans had of Native Americans at particular times could be used to draw conclusions about German society, whether they reflected the socio-cultural problems of absolutist mini-states in the eighteenth century, nationalism and cultural pessimism in the nineteenth, or National Socialism and the divisions of the Cold War during the twentieth.

This study on the employment of the German fascination with Indians for Nazi propaganda will contextualize some of these fears, longings, and cultural struggles in German society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. National Socialism built on a conservative nationalist tradition of addressing these struggles. Since the image of Indians in Germany was intertwined with nationalism, the Nazis could readily utilize it to promote their ideology in domestic and foreign propaganda. Their development of an ideological doctrine based on racial thought and German indigeneity also generated changes in the German perception of Native Americans. These interrelated and mutually reinforcing developments included the postulation of shared character traits, of shared mental and spiritual idiosyncrasies, and of shared historical experiences between Germans and Indians. Thus, the exploitation of the traditional German fascination with Indians helped the Nazis ensure the loyalty of large parts of society; it instilled national pride and incited hatred against the Allied powers.

The emergence of German conservative nationalism and national identity up to the founding of the German nation-state in 1871 was significantly influenced by socioeconomic changes in Central Europe during the nineteenth century. The industrial era saw a tremendous upheaval in social structures, rapid urbanization, and industrialization, resulting in class conflicts and cultural pessimism. Germany soon developed into a leading industrial power in Europe, while aristocratic elites tried to retain their status in the political hierarchy. Economic development spurred political envy and the race to develop a colonial empire, culminating in World War I. National Socialism profited from this escalation of political and cultural crises by fanning Germans’ inferiority complex after the defeat, crying for revenge, and promising to solve the internal strife with radical measures. In these developments over a period of more than seventy years, the German image of Indians was more or less explicitly present in the discussions about German identity and Germany’s place in the world. It adapted over time as the Germans’ self-perception underwent changes.

The perception of Native Americans and the German image of Indians are closely linked to the quest for national identity in Germany, as Hartmut Lutz has elaborated. He coined the term “Indianthusiasm” to signify “a yearning for all things Indian, a fascination with American Indians, a romanticizing about a
supposed Indian essence.” In the era of evolutionist thinking, wherein human progress was regarded as occurring on a linear scale, looking at Native Americans seemed to open a window to the ancient Germanic past. Nationalism received much of its authority and credit by postulating ancient national traditions. A nation, it was argued, was an eternal entity of blood-based relations, linked to particular inheritable character traits and mental idiosyncrasies and dependent on and determined by a particular environment. The historical discussion of the old Germanic tribes humanists had begun in the late medieval era provided eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nationalists with traditions that seemed very similar to depictions of Native Americans. Thus, many Germans believed that observing contemporary Native Americans—presuming that they were primitives—conveyed information about their own tribal past. The ensuing euphoric interest for ancient Germanic history could, following Lutz’s coinage of “Indianthusiasm,” be termed “Germanthusiasm” or, more comprehensively, “Norsetalgia.” I will employ Norsetalgia in this study because its proponents soon appropriated the history of Scandinavia as German and developed a general notion of Germanness as “Nordic,” romanticizing the history of both the Germanic tribes and the Scandinavian Norsemen. This historical comparison of American and Central/Northern European tribal peoples set the stage for applying typical motifs that will permeate the discussion of Indian imagery throughout this study.

The most important motif of Indian imagery, which I term the “fellow tribesmen” motif, postulates similarities between Germans and Native Americans in character, historical development, and in their relationship to the natural environment. Innumerable examples advance the idea that Germans and Indians supposedly thought alike. Similarities in thinking, many examples suggest, were due to both the Germans’ and Indians’ close relationship to nature or to particular economic systems, such as farming or forest subsistence. Honesty, courage, intuition, emotionality, and even a melancholy disposition were said to be shared character traits. These terms will be important for an understanding of national identity and its relation to the German imagery of Indians throughout this study. The historical developments considered to be shared predominantly involved warfare, spirituality, and leadership structures that emphasized the tribal organization of both Germans and Indians and stressed indigeneity. German nationalists’ claims of indigeneity increased their authority to demand recognition of Germany’s status as a nation. Indigeneity suggested ancient origins and traditions, and it established the notion of Germans as the descendants of a pure and ferocious aboriginal people still in touch with their roots.

Many Germans, detecting similarities between the depiction of Native Americans and (ancient) Germans, came to believe that Native Americans reciprocated their interest and fascination. This belief created room for notions of genuine kinship. Postulating similarities between Germans and Indians automatically
differentiated Germans from other Europeans who, presumably, could not relate to German rootedness and whose decadent societies endangered German cultural purity and integrity. Identifying themselves as indigenous peoples and particularly as soul mates of a sort to Native Americans, then, helped German nationalists distinguish the German self from a European other and generated notions of German uniqueness. This point brings out the multi-layered perceptions of self and other: while Indianthusiasts adored the Indian as an exotic other, they likewise portrayed Indians and Germans as only slightly different versions of the self in order to distinguish this self from the other in Europe. This “German-Indian self” helped characterize Germany in opposition to France, Great Britain, the United States, and “the West,” in general, as well as to ideas with which “the West” was associated.

Another typical motif derived from this distinction that construed Germans and Indians as fellow tribesmen: they had a “common enemy.” Identifying this enemy allowed German nationalists to utilize Indian imagery and warn fellow Germans of presumed dangers by employing historical comparison. For example, they could identify Germans with Indians on the indigeneity level, likening frontier conflicts during the conquest of the Americas to the conflicts on the frontier between the Roman Empire and ancient Germanic tribes in Central Europe. This scenario portrayed both Germanic and Native American tribes as struggling against an expanding, technologically superior settler state. This, in turn, allowed for comparative tales of heroic defense, of the threat of invasion and the terror of defeat, and of unifying leadership. Contemporary Germans were reminded of the common enemy when Native American dispossession, removal, and coerced assimilation were compared to recent German history, particularly to World War I and its aftermath. In both cases, Germans and Native Americans appeared to be the victims of imperialism on the part of the Western Allies/colonial powers in North America. Therefore, the common enemy motif was a significant propaganda device against Great Britain, the United States, and France throughout the twentieth century.

For the discussion of Nazi propaganda, the fellow tribesmen and common enemy motifs are particularly interesting because they continue the traditional combination of fascination, contempt, and envy in German perceptions of America. Since German-speaking immigrants made up one of the largest immigrant groups, the North American continent always held the promise of freedom and self-fulfillment to German observers. After the founding of the United States, fascination with and envy of its democratic practices were mixed with contempt for American society’s presumed lack of sophistication. An increasing inferiority complex transformed the German envy of American technological achievements and material wealth into contempt for Americans’ supposed lack of true culture. These attitudes introduced a distinction between American civilization and German culture that reinforced the fellow tribesmen and common enemy motifs,
embedding Germans’ perception of Native Americans into their wider perception of America. Nationalists and National Socialists evoked the fellow tribesmen motif in claiming similarities between German and Native American tribal cultures, and they evoked the common enemy motif in claiming that both German and Native American cultures were endangered by the imperialist expansion of a decadent American civilization.

This comparison of Native Americans and Germans, like most comparisons, involved generalizations and simplifications. It posited similarities at the expense of accuracy. Among the generalizations important for this study is the widespread perception of Native Americans as one people and culture, which Hartmut Lutz describes as the “supposed Indian essence.”4 Although this misperception is not exclusively German, it is significant for understanding the fellow tribesmen motif, especially in the context of Nazi ideology. Seeing Native Americans as one people but several tribes, the Nazis could apply racial categories and construct similarities between Germans and Native Americans more easily. Like Indians, they argued, Germans were one people consisting of several tribes; unlike the Indians, however, their strength emanated from the German tribes having united (under a strong leader) and thus, having truly become a people.5 The racial perspective on Native tribes also allowed Nazi propaganda to construe frontier history in the Americas as a race war, from which Nazi scholars and political analysts could make predictions about future racial conflicts. To avoid making the types of generalizations often found regarding the perception of America, I emphasize different groups of Germans who developed different perceptions of Native America: as we cannot speak of one German perception of Indians, I will identify specific groups of German protagonists, media audiences, or ideologists as necessary.

The German representation of the fellow tribesmen motif as a tribal brotherhood exemplifies the tendency of such representations to be based on stereotypes and misconceptions. Along with the German perception of self, these stereotypes changed over time such that the depiction of Native Americans in Germany likewise changed. H. Glenn Penny observed that, from the time Germans discovered their interest in Native Americans and began writing about them, they have striven for authenticity in their descriptions even as they have perpetuated stereotypes: “One striking aspect of this relationship is the seemingly endless effort by scholars, museum curators, pedagogues, and dilettantes of all fashions to control the discourse on ‘Indianness’ in Germany by denouncing popular clichés and attempting to replace them with new versions of ‘the authentic Indian.’”6

To avoid this quandary, I will forgo this tradition of German “cliché busting,” or the struggle among authors for the authority to define the authentic Indian. Many of these authors have juxtaposed German clichés with what they perceived as Native American reality.7 My study, however, will focus on the development of perceptions of Native Americans in Germany since the early nineteenth cen-
tury and on the representation of Indian images in the German media during the Third Reich. It explores the functions of these particular representations and images for the Nazi leadership, and how they served to promote Nazi ideology. For this purpose, it is irrelevant whether German authors knew what the reality of Native American life actually was. The important question is what was portrayed as reality, and what function such a portrayal had. The tropes of Indian imagery analyzed in the following chapters will allow for a better understanding of the complex and expedient application of Nazi ideology in propaganda, in the presentation of Nazi ideals to the German public, and in the representation of the foreign powers in Germany during the Nazi era. They can be understood as ingredients that propaganda designers used to sharpen their statements on a particular issue and to focus the attention of the target audience. Different tropes were applied when feasible and thus served the greater goal of invoking Nazi ideology.

My analysis of German national identity, Indian imagery, and Nazi propaganda draws on and extends the results of previous studies on German perceptions of Native Americans. It builds on Hartmut Lutz’s approach of explaining the interrelation between Indian image and nation formation. Klaus von See’s historiography of Germans’ fascination with their own tribal history provides many vantage points for the interrelation between German Indianthusiasm and Norsetalgia. My approach to nationalism and historical consciousness applies discussions on the construction of identity and tradition by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Werner Sollors, and Benedict Anderson. Barbara Haible’s extensive analysis of Indian novels during the Third Reich emphasizes major aspects of Nazi ideology expressed in the Indian image. Deborah Allen provides a survey of influential factors for the Indian image and of sources by which the image was disseminated in Germany between 1871 and 1945. Glenn Penny’s long-awaited book *Kindred by Choice* came out while this book was being prepared for publication, and thus its findings can only be considered in passing. His vigorous analysis of imagery, perceptions, and cultural practices regarding Native Americans among Germans from 1800 to today makes many of the same observations on the longevity and flexibility of said imagery, perceptions, and practices as the present study.

My own in-depth study of German periodicals expands the corpus of scholarship on Indian imagery and representations of Native Americans in Germany during the first half of the twentieth century. This includes daily newspapers, magazines, academic journals, as well as a few selected academic monographs, works of fiction, and government documents. My approach to these sources emphasizes Romantic notions, the tradition of cultural despair, the conservative rejection of Enlightenment ideals, and German claims to indigeneity. In addition, I highlight the influence of racial thought on representations of Native Americans during the Third Reich, which has previously received only minor
attention in the literature, wherein the complexity and ambivalence of racist ideology in regard to Indianthusiasm is not adequately represented. This focus provides a more comprehensive view of the historical development of Indian imagery and better insight into Nazi applications of this imagery in propaganda. In general, my approach represents a new perspective on German intellectual history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that will contribute to the understanding of conservatism, nationalism, and National Socialism. It is thus an interdisciplinary amalgam of cultural history, intellectual history, and media history, of German perceptions of (Native) America and of the Western hemisphere.

The analysis of such a heterogeneous corpus of sources conveys numerous inconsistencies in the representation of Native Americans as well as in the presentation of Nazi ideals. It exposes the propagandistic intention of many texts by illustrating contradictions even within the work of individual authors whose publication records unveil changes in their arguments and writing. Heterogeneous sources, such as newspapers owned by the Nazi party, popular family magazines, or political analyses, make it possible to observe different approaches and intensity of propaganda directed at different target audiences. Comparing these over a longer time period allowed me to identify alternating phases in the depiction of Native topics and to put them into a historical context. It yields insight into the German perception of America, of which Indianthusiasm is a part, for contextualizing the Third Reich’s representation of America and its Indian policy within a longer tradition, and for identifying traditional tropes of this representation that have survived through several different political regimes in Germany. Had I focused on only one group of sources, or only one genre, I would not have been able to analyze these multiple layers. Expanding the academic discussion of Indian imagery in the early twentieth century, but also the understanding of Nazi policies, academia, and international relations during the National Socialist era, the multimedia approach to my analysis of the Indian image broadened the discussion to include more German intellectual history.

Furthermore, my study discusses the competition among different rival camps within the Nazi movement. For example, media releases and scholarly projects within the Third Reich often applied contradictory language or made contradictory claims because of rivalries between Heinrich Himmler and Alfred Rosenberg and the respective institutions over which they presided. This rivalry had repercussions for the public debates on ancient history or for the interpretations of racial studies, as Michael Kater’s work on Himmler’s SS research foundation Ahnenerbe illustrates. Similarly, Barbara Haible identified and analyzed a debate over the viability of Indian role models between camps of purists and pragmatists among Nazi educators, publishers, administrators, and propagandists, which my analysis of periodicals explores further.

It is important to keep in mind that writing in Nazi Germany was highly charged with political implications and that it featured radicalized ideas, expressed
in a radicalized language. That is, authors were likely to explain and support even simple issues in a language loaded with superlatives and totalitarian terms, which made their statements extremely pointed and narrow and thus invited contradictions when even a few terms varied from text to text. These contradictions appear even more blatant in hindsight and with the compiled knowledge of some seventy years of international scholarship on the Nazi era. Therefore, my analysis will point out inconsistencies between ideological programmatic directives and publications in media and scholarship primarily to highlight possible propagandistic intentions behind these deviations.

Writing a study about a society’s perception and stereotypical representation of other peoples carries terminological pitfalls, problems of voice, and the challenge of navigating between layers of analysis. Researchers following such an approach must distinguish clearly between a primary source’s statement of a fact or idea, its possible propagandistic intentions, and their own assessment of them both. In many cases, propagandistic implications are not identical with authorial intent: an author’s statements about Native American reservations may be true and his statements may be consistent with official Nazi ideology, but even if they are, one cannot necessarily conclude that the author made these statements in order to promote Nazi ideology explicitly. When scholarship touches on political reflections and culturally sensitive topics, the terminological intricacies are complicated further. This is the case in Native American studies as much as in scholarship about National Socialism. Conducting an analysis of German society and using mostly German sources in an English text also proved to be a challenge to stringent and unambiguous writing because of the culturally distinct use of terms that often lack a literal equivalent in the other language. These intricacies are particularly urgent where the totalitarian jargon of National Socialism is concerned. For that reason, my study follows a number of terminological guidelines to avoid misunderstandings or political implications where none are intended, and to ensure the best possible translation of German meaning into English.

Scholars, activists, and the media in English-speaking countries have long debated the correct terminology to denote indigenous peoples in America without having come to a satisfying agreement. All versions, be they Indian, American Indian, Native American, or American aboriginal have flaws either in their inclusiveness, their distinctiveness, or in political sensitivity and even sensibility. Being aware of the inconclusive nature of this debate, I will follow Robert Berkhofer’s approach and speak of Indians when the German or American image is meant, and of Native Americans when the actual people(s) in the United States are discussed.19 When the focus is on indigenous peoples in North America or the Americas, the term American aboriginals will denote the entire hemisphere and thus include the Inuit, Native Hawaiians, and indigenous peoples in Latin America, as well. To avoid generalizations, I will name indigenous peoples by
tribe whenever possible. Similarly, I will differentiate and use precise, distinctive specifications and group markers whenever possible to avoid generalizations in talking about the Germans, the Americans, or even the Nazis.

Different cultural-historical backgrounds between the English and German languages require a sensitive use of terms and translations. It is important to note that some terms, such as race, acquire different meanings and cultural implications in the other language. The usage of race and Rasse is the result of different historical developments in the United States and in Germany. In this English text, I will use the English term race in the German meaning of Rasse, thus implying the notions of biological determinism and scientific racism that the German term carries. Large parts of my analysis will concern the German biologistic discussions of American aboriginals and Germans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and thus the concept of Rasse will recur throughout this study. Although common German terms such as Weltanschauung and Zeitgeist have entered the English lexicon for lack of appropriate English terms and should not receive special emphasis in English texts, I will treat some, such as Lebensraum and Blitzkrieg, as foreign terms and italicize and capitalize them to highlight the Nazi context of their usage. In addition, I have found it necessary to use a few German terms rather than employ an English equivalent or paraphrase. Terms such as völkisch or Naturvölker will remain untranslated because the English expressions do not adequately represent the original meaning, or sometimes even denote the opposite. I will provide explanations and possible English expressions for these in a note upon first occurrence.

Throughout the text, I will use English translations for all original German sources in order to support the flow of the text; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own. A few notes will offer explanations and context for some translations. These explanations have become necessary because the totalitarian language of National Socialism developed innumerable neologisms beyond regular forms of usage, often to the point of absurdity. In many cases, no English equivalents are available, raising the ethical question of whether an equivalent should be found in the first place, as using the original points out and retains the singularity of these terms. When feasible, these explanations will also provide the etymology of terms to highlight the intellectual traditions on which National Socialism relied.

The three content chapters in this study are organized in a thematic order that will facilitate understanding of the interrelationships among Romantic notions, nationalism, and conservatism with the emergence of Indian imagery. They will address the sociocultural and political developments in Germany throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to explain the ideological roots of National Socialism and to illustrate why National Socialists believed that Indian imagery would be valuable for propaganda, both at home and abroad. They will also highlight particular applications of Indian imagery in the German
media, in scholarship, and policy-making. This study is thus a mélange of intellectual, cultural, and media history of Germany, as well as a transatlantic history of German-American relations over the period of the early 1800s to 1945.

Chapter 1 will discuss the historical context for an understanding of the interrelationships among Indian imagery, national identity, and National Socialism. It will introduce the evolution of Indian imagery in Germany, the basic criteria that helped develop a belief in the special relationship between Germans and Indians, as well as typical tropes of Indian enthusiasm and the historiography of German perceptions on American aboriginals. Romanticism nurtured both Indian imagery and national identity. It established and amplified many tropes for the representation of both Germans and American aboriginals. Particularly important in this context will be the emphasis on cultural pessimism in Germany. These basic features intensified during the latter half of the nineteenth century as conservative nationalism established notions of German uniqueness by rejecting Enlightenment ideas and thus alienating Germans from “the West.” The militarization of German society allowed for a growing militancy in Romantic notions about German identity, which increasingly perceived Germans and Indians as similar in their physical drives and penchant for barbaric violence while dismissing reason and rational thinking as alien concepts.

Chapter 2 will emphasize the influence of Indian imagery on the process of nation-formation and nationalism in Germany, and it will scrutinize how this influence was appropriated in Nazi ideology. The models of peoplehood and of invented traditions will illustrate the reference to Indians in nationalist attempts to define a German creation myth, a sacred history, a national character, a sacred geography, and religion. Examples of Indians apparently sharing typical (tribal) German traits supported claims to German indigeneity and German uniqueness in Europe. Expanding the scope and resource base of previous studies, this chapter further emphasizes racial thought, scientific racism, and indigeneity. Although German racism claimed the superiority of Germans over non-Aryan peoples, this analysis illustrates that the Nazis’ emphasis on indigeneity allowed for a positive racial interpretation of Native Americans. Claims to biological, spiritual, and historical relationships between Germans, their ancestors, and American aboriginals will be discussed in depth.

Chapter 3 will build on the analysis of the interrelationships among nationalism, Indian imagery, and Nazi ideology, and look at applications of such imagery in media, scholarship, and politics. It will also highlight the contradictions that the pragmatic employment of Indian imagery for propaganda for varying audiences and purposes automatically entailed. It will deconstruct the notions of German uniqueness by conducting a transatlantic comparison of notions of indigeneity, primitiveness, and tribalism. In the end, it will show that the Nazis’ application of Indian imagery was a matter of expediency and opportunism in the service of gaining and retaining power.
Both German and American reform movements around 1900 employed notions of naturalism, primitivism, and public health. The Nazis, while observing American practice, appropriated the German reform and Youth movements' notions and thus continued and reinforced references to Indian imagery. Typical tropes of Indian imagery were expediently utilized for Nazi propaganda. Chapter 3 will thus scrutinize the trope of the vanishing Indian, revealing the continuation of typical Eurocentric notions of manifest destiny. My analysis of racial thought and cultural determination, however, also illustrates the Nazis' argument that indigenous cultures in the Americas were on the verge of revitalization and reinvigoration. The discussion of these observations will take into account the political analysis of the “Indian New Deal” in the United States, the Indigenist movement in Latin America, and how the racial interpretation of these movements and policies in the Western hemisphere reveals the political and economic interests of Nazi Germany in these regions.

In the context of the expediency of images, a discussion of which traditional Indian images worked well for Nazi propaganda in particular situations and why is needed. Chapter 3 will therefore scrutinize the continuation of typical German anti-American notions during the Nazi era. The Nazis pointed an accusing finger at frontier massacres, repression, forced assimilation, and economic exploitation as welcome ammunition for their propaganda efforts. This approach, in emphasizing American persecution of Natives, deflected attention from the Nazis' persecution of dissidents and ethnic minorities, and helped Germans to identify with Native victims by invoking the common enemy motif. In some instances, however, positive reference to Indians was less profitable for Nazi propaganda so that notions of the master race prevailed. The academic debates on the discovery of America, spawned by the development of the Bering Straits migration theory and by the 450th anniversary of Columbus’s first voyage in 1942, enabled Nazi propagandists to emphasize the German contribution to the discovery and settlement of America. Pre-Columbian expeditions and German agents of settlement and exploration were highlighted in order to depict the conquest of the continent as the achievement of the Germanic race. American aboriginals played only minor roles in these assertions of German greatness.

One of the best-known images of Indians is that of the fierce warrior, which was utilized in the Nazi-controlled media to instill militarism and heroism in the German population. Newspapers spiced up their reports from the war fronts by stating that Germans fought “like Indians.” A short discussion of soldier jargon in this context reveals that reference to Indian warriors even entered the German soldiers’ lexicon. A comparison with contemporary American publications supports the impression that many Germans perceived Native Americans as possessing superior fighting skills. Children were prepared for war through a gradual intensification of training that began with playing Indian and ended with war games, instilling youthful joy in soldiers going into combat.
Many Indian tropes in the media and popular culture during the Nazi era reveal academia’s entanglement in and exploitation (often from within) for propagandistic efforts. German cultural anthropology, having produced some of the most prominent scholars in the field, was engaged in the analysis of indigenous peoples regarding their value for postwar treatment in the future German colonies. Racial thought allowed the Nazis to declare themselves the natural protectors of indigenous peoples, and thus, as benign colonizers. Interest in “secret Indian wisdom” triggered a number of projects in medicine, which could have boosted German healthcare, but which also illustrate the Nazis’ fanaticism in the pursuit of military goals. These examples illustrate a selection of the multitude of possible applications of Indian imagery during the Nazi era, and they point to opportunities for future scholarship that will be addressed in the concluding remarks.

Primary Sources on Indianthusiasm in Nazi Print Media

Analyses of German perceptions of Native Americans have concentrated on fiction for a long period. Recent works have introduced the analysis of Wild West shows and ethnographic exhibitions, or the representation of Native Americans in visual arts and films. A few works have conducted comprehensive studies that included a great variety of sources and covered large time spans, such as Hartmut Lutz’s Indianer und Native Americans, Deborah Allen’s “Reception and Perception of North America’s Indigenous Peoples in Germany 1871-1945,” and H. Glenn Penny’s Kindred by Choice: Germans and American Indians since 1800. Barbara Haible’s Indianer im Dienste der NS-Ideologie analyzed the Indian image in German children’s literature during the Third Reich and contributed to ongoing research about Karl May and its appropriation by Nazi educators and propagandists (1998). Focusing on the range of periodicals of the Nazi era, my own project expands the resource base and thus contributes to the research on perceptions of American aboriginals in Germany, on German-American relationships, as well as on National Socialism.

For the project of gaining an overview of the media representation of American aboriginals in Nazi Germany, the Internationale Bibliographie der deutschen Zeitschriftenliteratur, called Dietrich, has proven a most valuable tool. Dietrich offers an index of German-language periodicals from 1876 to 1964 (with a gap from 1881 to 1896). Its early twentieth-century editors claimed to have included “the most important” academic journals, magazines, and newspapers from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, as well as periodicals for German minorities in other countries, organized by author and keyword. The broad range of indexed periodicals ensures that a keyword search locates articles from various academic disciplines but also from the popular media. During World War II, Dietrich also
provided an index for German newspapers in occupied European countries. The index encompassed more than 5,000 periodicals and approximately 90,000 articles in 1940, so that an analysis of German print periodicals based on the selection in *Dietrich* can be sure to identify a majority of publications and to compile a representative sample of the German media environment during the time period in question.\(^\text{22}\)

The list of keywords and authors’ names from *Dietrich* generated by the focus of this study included famous authors such as Karl May and James Fenimore Cooper. *Dietrich* also yielded results for keyword searches on the German equivalents of *Indians* and *(United States of) America*, as well as on subject-related terms, such as *race relations*, *racial law*, and *racial studies*, on the related terms *anthropology*, *ethnology*, and *Völkerkunde*, on *Naturvölker*, and on the names of different Native groups. The time frame for the search encompassed the years 1925–1945 to enable a comparative analysis between the media of the Weimar Republic and of the Third Reich and to investigate possible changes after 1933. The resulting list consists of more than 1,200 articles and essays in over 250 periodicals. It has proven valuable to vary search terms, as many articles on the colonial history of the United States were listed under *America*, rather than *United States of America*. The variation and combination of search terms detected and avoided problems of classification, which would otherwise have significantly diminished the scope and number of articles found. In addition, the diversity of these search terms in relation to *Dietrich’s* broad coverage of periodicals allowed for a wide spread of sources. It can be said that Indian topics were published across the entire range of German-speaking media and in the entire period, covering newspapers of both political and commercial backgrounds, cultural and single-issue magazines of all types, as well as academic journals from diverse disciplines.

However, basing the analysis on the media representation of American aboriginals in this periodicals index revealed a number of problems and raises questions about the value of *Dietrich’s* selection criteria and priorities for systematic research. First, in a number of instances, date information in *Dietrich* was incorrect as the dates of some articles in the index deviated by a few days in either direction from the actual publication dates. Second, a few articles listed in *Dietrich* could not be located at all, and even the supportive research by library staff at the University of Leipzig could not clarify why the articles were listed as they were. One could speculate that, in instances where daily newspapers and magazines have been microfilmed, the institutions conducting the film recording only recorded the first few pages of an issue (covering the politics and economy sections) and skipped the rest, namely, the human interest sections or the feature pages, where references to Native Americans were more likely. If this is the case, then many promising articles have been lost to analysis. It could also be that, at times, indexers mismatched articles and periodicals in their list, which would not be surprising given a total of 90,000 articles per year in a pre-electronic tabula-
tion age. Third, spot checks and random browsing in newspapers and illustrated magazines beyond the entries in *Dietrich* revealed numerous articles and essays on Native topics not indexed by *Dietrich*. This problem in particular raises the issue of the bibliography’s selection criteria, and, thus, the reliability of this medium as a source listing. *Dietrich*’s editors stated in 1940 that in “less important journals and in publications appealing to laymen, especially in weekly magazines and the supplements to daily newspapers, an adequate selection is made; and in some publications, only now and then were suitable articles considered.”23 Thus, for many non-indexed articles located through browsing, it must be assumed that they were either not recognized by *Dietrich*’s editors or not deemed important enough. Consequently, systematic research on a particular topic depends on the editors’ selection criteria, their thoroughness, and their diligence: a study based on *Dietrich* can claim to provide a representative overview but not completeness, and claims about the relevance of index entries are entirely subjective. This has a heightened impact on systematic analyses of popular magazines and newspapers which, as the editors state, were considered “less important.” It can, therefore, be assumed that many more than the located 1,200 articles were published on Native topics during the time period in question, particularly in popular magazines and newspapers.

A few other problems further complicate a thorough analysis of the German media environment of the 1920s–1940s. The German National Library (DNB), founded in Leipzig in 1912, collected daily newspapers and several weekly magazines only sporadically during the early years, and not all publishers sent the requested issues for archiving regularly. Therefore, I had to consult many different state libraries, such as the *Zeitschriftenarchiv* of the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, the Sächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek (SLUB) in Dresden, and the Institut für Zeitungsforschung in Dortmund, to review most issues identified in *Dietrich*.24 The best tool for locating *Dietrich*’s listings is the online *Zeitschriftendatenbank* (ZDB), hosted by the Staatsbibliothek Berlin.25 However, if, for example, *Dietrich* lists an article in a periodical called *Die Sonne*, the source information is not sufficient to identify *Die Sonne* in the ZDB, since the database hosts several dozen periodicals by that name and *Dietrich* does not always list subtitles. Once a periodical was unequivocally identified and located through the ZDB, research in hosting libraries often revealed that particular issues are not available. The most common reason was loss through bombing raids in the war. In a number of cases, the central database has not yet been updated to reflect war losses in local libraries, and sometimes, even these libraries still list items in their inventories that were actually destroyed.

To contextualize the information on American aboriginals gleaned from these newspaper articles, I complemented my overview on periodicals with Fritz Sänger’s collection of press directives issued by Goebbels’s Propaganda Ministry during the prewar years.26 These directives illustrate the extent to which newspa-
pers were ordered to write about a particular topic, prepare articles in a particular way (i.e., fact-based or inflammatory), and give them prominence in particular issues. Directives also include reprimands to editorial boards when articles failed to conform to the desired appearance. Since direct reference to Native Americans was made only during the heated propaganda battle after the November pogroms of 1938, it must be assumed that journalists were free to write about Indians and believed Indians a topic safe enough to avoid angering the ministry’s censors. In this sense, one basic conclusion of my study is that “the Indian” seems to have been perceived mostly as soft news. It is all the more interesting that the close analysis of many articles filtered out typical features of Nazi ideology, leading to the conclusion that, depending on the publication, authors were either active followers of the Nazi regime, padded their articles with the “appropriate” Nazi language, or simply represented traditional Indian imagery in accordance with Nazi doctrine and thus did not require any steering or prodding by Nazi propagandists. The following quote illustrates that the Nazis did not need to introduce the image of Indians or prompt the media to use it as it was a prominent feature in German popular culture and they could exploit it in order to transport their own ideology, often very subtly: “Propaganda does not mean casting a populace toward particular ideas, providing them with slogans, or revealing opinions to them. Propaganda means talking about things that the populace wants to hear; it means using their drives and passions, investigating their desires, spying on their attitudes, in order to utilize them for one’s own goals.”

Other sources proved valuable to complement the overview on the interest in Indians in the German public and to understand the deep penetration of Indian imagery into German everyday life. A number of dictionaries of soldier jargon illustrate the influence of Indian warrior images on Germans in the context of warfare, which extends from World War I to today’s Bundeswehr. Spot checks confirmed the influence for Austrian and Swiss soldiers, as well. To document the political use of Indian imagery and to confirm numerous references to Hitler in American sources, I have analyzed a collection of Hitler’s speeches, the documentation of his monologues in the Führerhauptquartier in 1941, as well as Mein Kampf and his second book for references to Native Americans and for uses of Indian imagery. Government documents provide insight into possible applications of Indian imagery in politics, espionage, or directed scholarship. However, the institutional rivalry among the various branches of the Nazi government and even within the German military make it very difficult to follow consistent references to American aboriginals in documents. Thus, the nonexistence of files on Native topics in one institution (for example, the intelligence service of one particular branch of the military) does not mean that other branches did not pursue such projects. The finding aids at the Bundesarchiv in Berlin did not reveal many direct references to Native topics, and future research would have to define par-
The texts on Native Americans analyzed in this study show a great variety of topics often related to the nature of the publication. They range from travelogues, popular historiographies, and anecdotal reports to detailed analyses of historical events or of current developments in Native communities and in their relationships with non-Native societies. Fictitious stories or uncommented translations of Native fairy tales and sagas can be found as well as ethnographic treatises on very specific aspects of material culture in Native societies. The time frame for this study, designed to detect changes in the representation of American aboriginals in Germany after 1933, yielded mixed results. Typical cliché-busting stories that juxtapose the romanticized Indian past with life on the reservations continue after the Nazi takeover of power and the resulting tighter rein on the media, and so do popular historiographies of settlement and conquest. Adventurous feature pages mixed with semi-fictional reminiscence about the old frontier days appealed to children and adolescents in popular magazines of the 1920s and early 1930s as much as to the Hitler Youth in their party organization magazines. Some changes in representation may not be directly attributed to Nazi influence.
but to the course of events, such as the Indian New Deal in the United States after 1934, but these developments were subject to a visible Nazi influence in many publications, as their depiction mirrored Nazi ideology and racial doctrine.

Several changes in the appearance of publications did not often concern the image of Indians but showed Nazi influence, nevertheless. Although popular magazines, such as Daheim, continued to discuss exotic places, technology, and soft news, they began to reflect the country’s gearing up toward war. Apart from droves of articles on Hitler, Daheim and other illustrated magazines discussed military inventions, provided instruction on food preservation for households, and commented on Germany’s progress toward self-sufficiency in food production. Where Indian imagery was concerned, changes in representations were often due to fluctuating phases in propaganda. When the Nazi leadership required fierce media attacks against the United States, typical anti-American imagery, including the accusatory descriptions of Indian massacres, were published with higher frequency, as many articles in November and December 1938 and 1942–1945 reveal.

A short overview of the major kinds of periodicals and the types of articles with Native focus they produced helps to contextualize these changes. Daily newspapers mainly carried news about political events, such as the Indian New Deal, analyses of race relations in the United States and Latin America, eulogies for prominent writers such as Karl May or James Fenimore Cooper, or anti-American accusations. The articles on Native topics rarely carried photographs or sketches. While eulogies or discussions of new findings in scholarship on Natives usually appeared in the miscellaneous, culture, or human interest pages, political analyses and inflammatory leads were often prominently placed on the front page or page two. Major examples of newspapers with a high frequency of Native topics or reports about the United States were the Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten, the Münchener Neueste Nachrichten, the Frankfurter Zeitung, and the Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung. The Völkischer Beobachter, purchased by Hitler in 1920 to function as the Nazi Party mouthpiece, represents a cross section of articles with Native focus. It covered archaeological digs in the Americas, mused about the rise and fall of pre-Columbian empires, discussed racial politics and race relations abroad, praised Karl May and the German explorers and settlers of America, and defamed the United States for its Indian policy.

Weekly and monthly magazines committed more space to articles with Native topics and usually carried a number of photographs. In many of the popular magazines, such as Koralle, Universum, Die Gartenlaube, or Daheim, exotic places and peoples featured as prominently as technological progress and fashion. The focus on technology and exoticism grew stronger because these topics targeted the youth. Some periodicals, such as Der Erdball, Forschungen und Fortschritte, and Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen, published academic findings for a
broad audience and had a high frequency of articles on Natives of the entire Western hemisphere. Other periodicals that apparently covered Native topics frequently to profit from Indianthusiasm were *Die Woche*, *Illustrierte Zeitung* (Cologne and Leipzig), *Velhagen und Klasings Monatshefte*, and *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*. These publications, in particular, utilized photographs that often reinforced German stereotypes about Indians and echoed typical Nazi sentiments about race relations in the United States.

Several periodicals focused on single issues or regions, and many provided opportunities to discuss Indians. Among these, magazines and journals for the German minority in South America and those that appealed to German investors in these regions were the most fruitful. Many articles on indigenous peoples were published in *Lasso*, *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv*, and *Ibero-Amerikanische Rundschau*. Apart from these regional-interest periodicals, magazines on hunting, on the Christian mission, and on medicine also made reference to indigenous affairs. Educational magazines and journals often included articles about Native schools in the United States and South America but also provided teachers with exciting anecdotes for use in class. Among these, *Bücherkunde*, *Pädagogische Warte*, *Die Deutsche Schule*, and *Der Deutsche Erzieher* informed their readers about U.S.-Indian policy and race relations. The latter two, especially, featured a few revealing articles by the foremost contemporary American Studies scholar in Germany, Friedrich Schönemann, whose argumentation mirrored Nazi perceptions of the United States. Periodicals owned by, or affiliated with, the Nazi Party were particularly interesting for this study, as they applied Nazi propaganda bluntly in their articles. Most importantly, magazines for the Hitler Youth, such as *Die HJ* or *Der Pimpf*, but also the SS mouthpiece *Das Schwarze Korps*, sought to influence readers by exploiting Indianthusiasm and Norsetalgia.

The array of academic journals shows a great variety of disciplines discussing Native topics, but also a variety of approaches and political intents. Major academic fields were physical and cultural anthropology, racial studies, history, political science, education, and geography. In cultural anthropology, journals such as the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, *Anthropos*, and *Ethnologischer Anzeiger* carried many essays on American Aboriginals. They could be very narrow in scope, for example, describing material culture among particular tribes, and thus often did not show explicit Nazi influence. However, anthropologists and historians often echoed Nazi ideology, as in their discussions of pre-Columbian settlements or their emphasis on racial segregation for the protection of racial purity. Some even actively sought to protect their discipline by carving out a niche for ethnological research within the Nazi system of directed scholarship. Thus, some academic periodicals offered scholars a niche where they could basically ignore the Nazis’ encroachment into German society, while others reflected Nazi ideals or even tried to curry favor with the Nazi leadership by applying Nazi ideology in their research and publications.
Similarly, political and geographic journals often conveyed Nazi political interests through Native topics. The *Monatshefte für auswärtige Politik* and the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* discussed politics in the Americas, race relations, and historical developments on an intellectual level with the possible intent of supporting Germany’s political claims in the hemisphere. The latter journal was a publication of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Geopolitik, an organization headed by general Karl Haushofer (1869–1946), who trained German spies. In addition to numerous German-American scholars, Nazi scholars and travelers suspected of doubling as spies, such as Colin Ross (1885–1945), wrote for the journal. Some academic topics popular throughout the 1930s and 1940s provided material for ideologues to argue for German superiority and Allied wickedness. Among these were the debate on the origin of American aboriginals, patterns of settlement in the Americas, and the earliest contacts between Europeans and America. Historical overviews based on political research, such as “Gewaltstaat USA,” or the promotion of euthanasia through Native examples, illustrate the influence of political will on science and popular media. Academic findings and debates in the journals and the selected monographs analyzed for this study were frequently revised for a broad audience and published in popular magazines and newspapers. In these revised and abridged texts, Nazi propaganda often became more explicit than in the academic treatises. Thus, Nazi ideology permeated academic journals, single-issue magazines, illustrated magazines, and daily newspapers to varying degrees among the different source types but also within a single type of source. An author could write about Indians because this topic promised great reader interest and because the Nazis did not often steer writers toward these topics. However, Native topics could easily be exploited for Nazi propaganda, especially since Indianthusiasm made the demand for Native topics high. Therefore, choosing a Native topic could prove valuable to conveying political meaning, as in anti-American propaganda or in specific issues such as racial hygiene.

Since Native topics were so widespread in the 1930s that Nazi propagandists had innumerable starting points for planting more or less explicit ideological statements, the history of Indianthusiasm must be seen as a major key to an understanding of German intellectual history and the development of German national identity in that period. If, as the above quote suggests, propaganda reflects the ability of leaders to utilize the desires and passions of the populace, Indianthusiasm must indeed have been convenient for such utilization. The following chapter will investigate the sources of these German desires and passions in regard to Native topics, as well as factors in the social, political, and cultural development of Germany during the nineteenth century. It will explore the interrelationships among Romanticism, nationalism, and Indianthusiasm in German society that made it so expedient for the National Socialists to appropriate Indianthusiasm during the 1930s and 1940s.
Notes


3. Ibid., 215–16.


5. Applying Norsetalgia in their notions of tribalism, the Nazis incorporated the Scandinavians, Dutch, Flemish, and peoples of the Baltic nations as “tribal brothers” into the construct of the “Germanic people” during World War II, most explicitly in the foreign divisions of the SS.


7. Ibid., 798–99.


16. Himmler (1900–1945) and Rosenberg (1893–1946) were rivals because of conflicts in ideological perspectives; both of them led academic as well as government institutions, and they both sought to assume more and more authority to reduce each other’s influence. Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich, rpt. 2005, s.v. “Himmler,” “Rosenberg”; Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus, 5th ed., s.v. “Wissenschaft.”


20. For discussions of the language of totalitarian regimes, see John Wesley Young, Totalitarian Language: Orwell’s Newspeak and Its Nazi and Communist Antecedents (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1992).

23. Ibid., 3.
24. These were in addition to issues held by the DNB, the large inventory of the university library at Leipzig, and the Leipzig *Stadtarchiv*, which holds originals of all Leipzig daily newspapers. The *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* was one of the most prominent daily papers in the country and yielded many relevant articles for this study.
27. Ibid., 39–44.
28. For an examination of Indian topics in the German popular press, taking into consideration the intentions and needs of authors, publishers, and the audience, see Allen, “Reception,” 38–41.
33. Publication of *Der Erdball* was terminated before 1933, so no data are available on possible Nazi influence after the takeover of power.
34. In her analysis of the German image of Indians from 1871 to 1945, Deborah Allen emphasizes the importance of illustrated magazines for perpetuating the imagery. Allen, “Reception.”