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# Who Became a Nazi?

A Structured Database of the German Denazification Questionnaires  
from the US Occupation Zone in Germany, 1945–9

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June 2024

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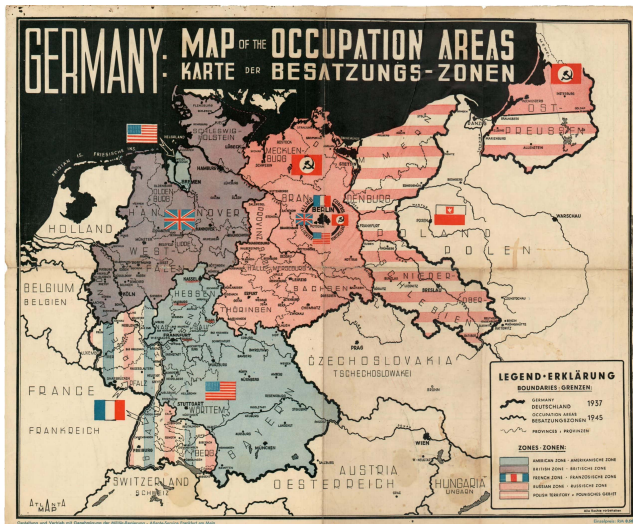
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# Individual Motivations for NSDAP Membership

- **What led Germans to support and join the Nazi party?**
    - WWII: one of the most well-documented historical periods.
    - What caused Germans to vote for and join the Nazi party still not fully understood. Most data *aggregate, small-scale, or non-representative*.
  - **Very hard to obtain individual-level data.**
    1. Army files (Rass and Rohrkamp, 2009; Blum and de Bromhead, 2019).
    2. NSDAP membership files (Falter and Brustein, 2015; Satyanath, Voigtländer and Voth, 2017).
    - Existing individual data **lacks socio-demographics** and **control group** → only data on **nazi party members**, but **not on non-members**.
- **Investigate motivations** using **denazification questionnaires**.
- RQ1:** *Which life events led to membership in nazi organizations?*
- RQ2:** *Did individuals benefit from nazi organization membership?*

# Post-World War 2 Division of Germany



# Denazification in Post-WWII Germany

- **Allies' 5 D's:** demilitarization, deindustrialization, decartelization, democratization, and **denazification**.
- **Potsdam Conference, 07/1945:** joint commitment to “[...] destroy last vestiges of Nazism and Fascism” (Dack, 2023, p.25).
- → **Denazification questionnaires** (*Fragebogen*) as *cornerstone* of denazification efforts.



## The Denazification Questionnaire (*Fragebogen*)

- **The Fragebogen included 131 questions:** socio-demographics, professional career, income history, political and professional organizations, and military service (Dack, 2023).



# The Denazification Questionnaire (*Fragebogen*)

- **The Fragebogen included 131 questions:** socio-demographics, professional career, income history, political and professional organizations, and military service (Dack, 2023).
- **Mandatory screening instrument:** every facet of post-war denazification revolved around it → political litmus test.
  1. **Sanctions:** identify and punish NSDAP members/sympathisers by removing them from positions of influence.
  2. **Employment:** to be completed and approved if individuals sought job as business manager or in civil service.



# The Denazification Questionnaire (*Fragebogen*)



**Figure 1:** Crowd of German citizens filling out questionnaires, Frankfurt am Main.



**Figure 2:** Fragebogen Submission in Berlin Steglitz, 1946.

# The Denazification Questionnaire (*Fragebogen*)

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- **Mandatory screening instrument:** every facet of post-war denazification revolved around it → political litmus test.
  1. **Sanctions:** identify and punish NSDAP members/sympathisers by removing them from positions of influence.
  2. **Employment:** to be completed and approved if individuals sought job as business manager or in civil service.
  3. **Scale:** Disseminated among 20+ million Germans, 1945–9.

→ *One of the largest known historic surveys & autobiographies.*

# Data

- **After military occupation:** U.S. took 500,000 individual *Fragebogen* files back to the U.S., to the National Archives (NARA), Maryland.
- **Our Data = 12,500 *Fragebogen* files:** representative population-stratified sample for U.S. occupation zone counties in NARA.
  1. *Socio-demographics:* education, religion, age, sex, ...
  2. *Nazi Organizations:* 55 organizations, start/end date.
  3. *Income History:* from 1931 to 1945.
  4. *Work History:* from 1931 to 1945.
- **Nazi organization members and non-members.**
  - First data with **treated** and **non-treated individuals**.
  - Better comparison group and more credible inference.
- **Linked data:**
  - Census data (industry, occupation, county).
  - NSDAP membership file data (Falter and Brustein, 2015).

# Planned Empirical Analysis

## 1. Descriptive Analysis

- Nazi organization members vs. non-members.
- Occupations, education, religion, income, . . .

## 2. Life events at $t \rightarrow$ probability to join nazi org. at $t + 1, 2, \dots, k$ .

- Outcome: membership in NSDAP or other nazi organizations.
- Exogenous variation: involuntary unemployment or under-employment after world economic crisis 1929–30.

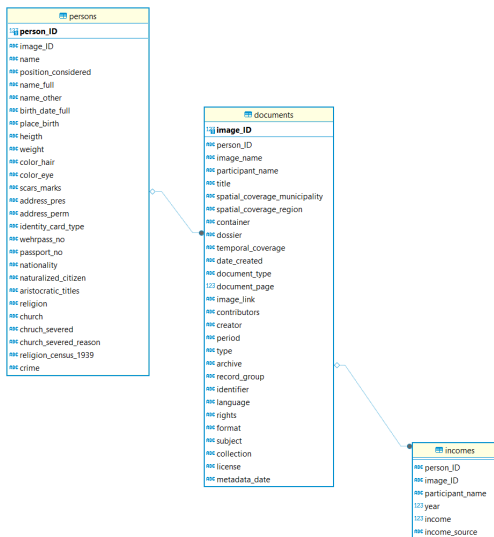
## 3. Nazi org. membership at $t \rightarrow$ potential benefits at $t + 1, 2, \dots, k$ .

- Outcome: income, prof. development (promotions), military service.
- Exogenous variation: timing in 'nazi-fication' of certain occupations.

# Current Status of Project

1. Structure of Relational Database ✓

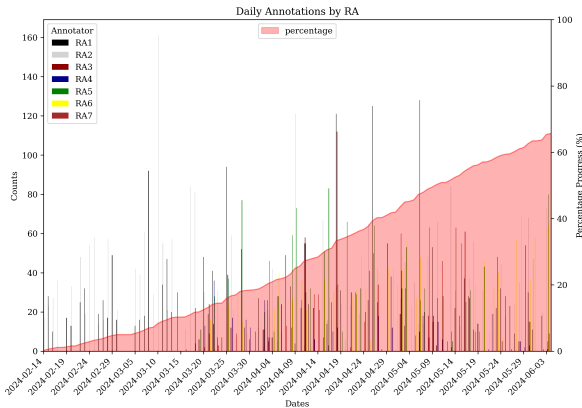
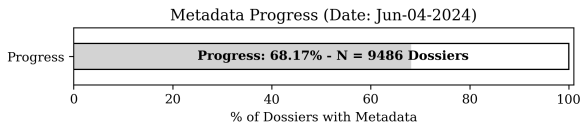
# Database Structure (simplified)



# Current Status of Project

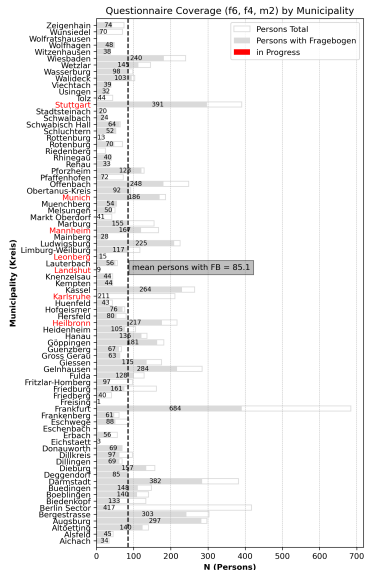
1. Structure of Relational Database ✓
2. Inventory of Dossiers & Metadata Coding (✓)
  - 70% done, to be finished end of July 2024.

# Fragebogen Metadata Annotation Progress





## Fragebogen Coverage Across Counties



# Current Status of Project

1. Structure of Relational Database ✓
2. Inventory of Dossiers & Metadata Coding (✓)
  - 70% done, to be finished end of July 2024.
3. OCR of *Fragebogen* sections with Multimodal LLMs (✓)
  - tested & workflow established.
- 4 RAs correct OCR as human-in-the-loop (✓)
  - testing with questionnaire sample and few RAs.
5. Descriptives and Analyses ✗

## Other Analyses & Questions of Interest

- Justification of membership and re-definition of past.
  - many dossiers contain written explanations, letters, supporting statements by neighbours, friends, colleagues.
- Disruption of work histories via occupation 'nazi-fication'.
  - forced under- or unemployment of religious/political groups.
- Post-WW2 professional development of individuals.
  - re-integration of former nazis in administration, business, politics.
- Impact of denazification on post-WW2 development.
  - disruption of professional histories.

# Summary

## What led Germans to support and join the Nazi party?

- Use the **denazification questionnaires (*Fragebogen*)** distributed in the US occupation zone in Germany, 1945–9 to measure individual membership in nazi organizations, work histories, and potential benefits from membership over time.
- **Individual-level panel data:** socio-demographics, work histories, nazi organization memberships, income, assets, military service.
- **Control groups:** data on both members and non-members → better comparison and estimation of effects of nazi organization membership.
- **Relational DB:** linkable to external data and make usable by public.
- **Contributions:**
  1. Individual motivations to join extreme right wing organizations.
  2. Costs and value of political connections.
  3. German pre- and post-WW2 history.

## References I

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