

**‘ALSATIAN BY SENTIMENT’:
GENDERED NEGOTIATIONS OF
MULTI-LAYERED NATIONAL BELONGING
IN ALSACE, 1918-1919**

by

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ABSTRACT

Following the First World War, French civil-military administrators constructed hierarchical layers of national belonging by issuing different identity cards to Alsatian residents, who strategically appealed these classifications to claim ‘belonging’ in the French national community. Referring to ideas of descent, patriotism, and local integration, the actors utilised and temporarily adapted gendered constructions of belonging to (re-)classify the civic status of Alsatians. Employing methodological and theoretical approaches from gender and transnational history along with nationalism scholarship and legal history, this thesis demonstrates that national belonging in post-WW1 Alsace was negotiated in a dynamic, multi-layered, and gendered manner.

In contrast to conceptualisations of the ‘civic’ character of France, French authorities and Alsatian residents invoked both civic and ethnic conceptions of belonging. Dismissing the option of minority rights for the Alsatian population, French administrators allocated privileges and rights according to family descent to determine who ‘belonged’ and was ‘foreign’; petitioners in turn co-opted gendered narratives of Alsatian Francophilia and nested belonging to link their local lived experiences to the nation. The identity cards challenged patrilineal descent and derivative citizenship. Female and male petitioners alike accessed gendered avenues to national belonging by using family members as proxy, yet their appeals reinforced gendered roles of women as ethno-cultural assimilators and men as civic participants in the nation. This thesis argues that in a moment of conflict the gendered boundaries of the national community were malleable, and re-imagined in overlapping, nested, and competing ways to fit the specific needs of the French administration and Alsatian inhabitants.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH AND THE WORD COUNT

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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Signed: ***Leonie Hanna Bausch***

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH AND THE WORD COUNT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. TRANSNATIONAL GENDER HISTORY	9
1.1 Gender history	9
1.2 Trans/national history	14
1.3 Entangled history	20
2. ALSACE IN BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY	24
2.1 The Alsatian Question.....	25
2.2 Frenchification	30
2.3 Nation, region, and gender in Alsace	37
3. GENDERED HIERARCHIES AND NATIONAL BELONGING	43
3.1 Pluralities of belonging	44
3.2 Deconstructing the civic-ethnic dichotomy	52
3.3 Gender differences and family structures	59
4. CITIZENSHIP AND LEGAL FRAMINGS OF BELONGING.....	67
4.1 Translating citizenship	68
4.2 Gendered citizenship.....	72
4.3 Re-configuring belonging in Alsace	77
5. RE-IMAGINING NATIONAL BELONGING.....	88
5.1 Negotiating belonging: appeal processes	89
5.2 Women as ‘assimilators’: intermarriage	100

5.3 Men as ‘citizens’: national sentiment	110
6. OVERLAPPING LAYERS OF NATIONAL BELONGING	118
6.1 Local ties: nested belonging.....	118
6.2 Family ties: belonging through relatives.....	129
6.3 Overlapping claims to Frenchness	136
CONCLUSION	142
BIBLIOGRAPHY	149

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: IDENTIFICATION FORMS95

TABLE 2: APPEAL LETTERS.....96

TABLE 3: INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING RE-CLASSIFICATION98

INTRODUCTION

National belonging can be expressed through a simple document, determining an individual's rights and duties within a nation-state: an identity card. Yet this dominant, formal understanding of national belonging as citizenship reduces multidimensional and overlapping notions of belonging to a national community to one simple category. Such reduction obscures hierarchies within the nation-state and ignores the manifold, gendered consequences of holding a certain category of belonging. In this thesis, I explore how different levels of national belonging were assigned through layered identity cards, which were subsequently negotiated between the French civil-military administration and residents of Alsace shortly after the First World War. Focusing on the boundaries of belonging to the French national community, determined by the distribution of identity cards in Alsace, I propose to consider national belonging as multi-layered concept. Identity cards created a surface which obscured many coexisting, nested, and sometimes conflicting layers of 'belonging' to the nation, all of which were deeply gendered. Individual residents and state administrators, women and men, French and German speakers re-imagined 'their' national and the Alsatian community in different ways to reflect their specific needs.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Alsace (and the neighbouring Lorraine) were highly contested territories, claimed by both French and German nation-states. Whereas German narratives emphasised that most of the population spoke Alsatian (a German dialect), French narratives underlined the impact of the French Revolution on the Alsatian allegiance to France. Following its annexation by the German Empire in 1871, the region gained an important symbolic role in French nationalist discourses and was known as 'the lost provinces.' The re-annexation of Alsace in 1918 was enthusiastically celebrated as 'return' to the 'motherland' by the French government and Alsatian diaspora in interior France. The 'liberation' from German rule was initially also welcomed by large parts of the Alsatian

population. However, to counter half a century of Germanisation, the French administration imposed strict measures to remove German influences and individuals from the region. Frenchification and oppression of regional particularities (most notably the Alsatian dialect and the confessional education system) led to tensions between local population and central administrators. I argue that these tensions were, among other things, fuelled by clashing visions of what it meant to be French which cannot be understood through simple centre/periphery or civic/ethnic dichotomies.

Following the armistice in November 1918, the French civil-military administration of Alsace distributed descent-based identity cards ranging from A to D, dividing the population of the region in four categories with differing rights. These identity cards did not confer citizenship, which was determined by the Treaty of Versailles, and were only valid in the transitional period until the peace treaty came into effect in January 1921. Yet they not only regulated the rights of Alsatians but were commonly believed to affect (future) citizenship status by contemporaries. From those who were assigned a B-card – signifying that only one of their parents was ‘of French origin’ – many appealed to be re-classified as ‘Alsatian A’ in order to expand their rights and, in the eyes of the appellants, the chances of being fully integrated as a French citizen. In their appeal letters, the petitioners explained why they deserved to belong to the French national community, referring to their supposedly French descent, national sentiments and patriotic actions, and integration in the local community. This thesis is based on a case study of around 40 successful appeals from B to A in Spring 1919 in the district of Wissembourg, a town in northern Alsace at the border to the German state of Palatinate (present-day Rheinland-Pfalz). The formal procedure of identity card distribution and appeals as well as the strategic arguments by the petitioners are analysed against the backdrop of contemporary French and German citizenship law in order to highlight how the transitional

order in Alsace complied with and diverged from dominant legalistic constructions of national belonging.

To expose the gendered layers of national belonging, I am combining multiple perspectives, drawing on methodological and theoretical approaches from gender and transnational history as well as nationalism scholarship and legal history. Firstly, I underscore the gendered constructions and performances of national belonging to show that ties to the national community were often defined and claimed differently for and by women and men.¹ Secondly, I am employing a transnational perspective which foregrounds cross-border interactions and connects French nationalisation policies with Alsatian local experiences.² Thirdly, I highlight the entanglement of top-down legalistic constructions of citizenship and identity cards by French (and German) authorities with bottom-up conceptions and constructions of national belonging by individual Alsations.³ Through choosing a multi-perspective approach I am challenging methodological nationalism. However, when analysing practices of national categorisation, it is not possible to fully overcome the limitations of methodological nationalism because of the necessity of artificial categories such as French Alsatian and Old German.

Working with and in multi-lingual spaces further complicates this research. The population of Alsace was composed of both German and French speakers; legislation as well as the naming of towns, streets, and even individuals changed in between the two languages depending on which nation-state ruled the region. Consequently, the primary material analysed in this thesis, ranging from German and French citizenship law to orders by the French civil-military administration to appeal documents distributed by French authorities and filled in by Alsatian

¹ Scott, 'Gender'; Boydston, 'Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis'; Hawkesworth and Disch, 'Feminist Theory'.

² Janz and Schönplüg, *Gender History in Transnational Perspective*; Midgley, Twells, and Carlier, *Women in Transnational History*; Körner, 'Transnational History'.

³ Werner and Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison'.

residents, is bilingual. Translating this material into English without losing nuances of meaning in the process is only partially possible. To counteract this limitation, I am drawing explicit attention to the untranslatability of central concepts such as citizenship and nationality which carry slightly different meanings in English, French, and German.

Building on gender/nation literature as well as critiques of the civic/ethnic dichotomy in nationalism scholarship, I connect feminist and transnational approaches in order to expand our understanding of national belonging as multi-layered. Firstly, I deconstruct the synonymous understanding of nationality and citizenship in Anglophone scholarship and propose the term *national belonging* to capture legalistic membership in as well as extra-legal ties to and constructions of the national community. I use national belonging to foreground the notion of membership or being part of a community, which is connected to but nevertheless distinct from questions of rights or identity. Secondly, I argue that Alsatians strategically constructed a sense of *nested belonging* in response to continuous national disruption, arguing they were part of a larger French community because of their integration in the local Alsatian community. On the one hand, I draw on the concept of nested identities which suggests that geographically based identities coexist with each other.⁴ On the other hand, I apply the analytical category of national indifference to question the importance of national identification for early twentieth-century Alsatians and consequently refrain from labelling nested belonging in Alsace as ‘identity.’⁵ Thirdly, I examine how family connections and hierarchies were utilised to claim national belonging and show that women as well as men framed themselves as family members in order to claim their national membership. I therefore expand on existing feminist analyses which have highlighted the interconnection of patriarchal family structures and political order in nation-states.⁶ Lastly, I suggest that civic and ethnic elements of

⁴ Herb, ‘National Identity and Territory’; Kaplan, ‘Territorial Identities and Geographic Scale’.

⁵ Zahra, ‘Imagined Noncommunities’.

⁶ McClintock, ‘Family Feuds’; Peterson, ‘Family Matters in Racial Logics’.

nationhood not only coexisted within the same nationalist movement and/or nation-state but that civic and ethnic roles within the national community were deeply gendered, assigning women the role of ethno-cultural transmitters and reproducers of the national community in contrast to men's role as participatory citizens in local public affairs and with civic commitments in the military.⁷

Throughout this thesis I contribute to conceptualising citizenship and national belonging more broadly as gendered concepts, by analysing them in a transnational and feminist framework. Moreover, I highlight a shift towards ethnic constructions of nationhood after the First World War which was not restricted to the 'new nation-states' in Central and Eastern Europe but also existed in supposedly 'established nation-states' such as France. I therefore draw attention to the lack of minority rights in the Alsatian borderland and the clash between assimilationist French policies and Alsatian constructions of nested belonging. Consequently, I claim that inclusionary 'voluntarist' or 'civic' approaches to national belonging may reveal (and certainly revealed in Alsace in 1919) their exclusionary, assimilationist, and 'ethnic' elements in conflict situations. In Alsace, national belonging was re-imagined when it was contested, resulting in overlapping and competing visions of the national community. Different legal framings of national belonging of the same subject – i.e. contradictory regulations on whether a certain individual or an entire region were to be French or German – put individuals in precarious situations. This has already shown by scholars discussing legal pluralism in colonial and other contexts as well as by historians analysing the risk of statelessness for women who were expatriated upon marriage to a foreigner but either did not gain citizenship in their husband's state or lost it upon divorce or the husband's death.⁸ I argue that inhabitants of Alsace

⁷ Hajdinjak, 'Tolerantly Ethnic and Aggressively Civic?'; Vickers and Vouloukos, 'Changing Gender/Nation Relations'; Coakley, 'National Identity and the "Kohn Dichotomy"'.
⁸ Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*; Cott, 'Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934'; Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*.

experienced instability and anxiety regarding their future prospects when their region was re-annexed but they themselves not necessarily integrated. This particularly applied to married women who gained an individual status during the transitional period but whose citizenship before and after that interim period was ultimately determined by their husband's status.

The thesis is structured as follows: In Chapter 1, I outline my methodology, connecting approaches of gender history, transnational history, and entangled history to create a multi-focal analysis of national belonging. In Chapter 2, I give an overview of the historical context and relevant discussions regarding the 'Alsatian Question' (the national affiliation of Alsace) in the 1870s fuelled by the German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871. Furthermore, I summarise the impact of migration and intermarriage and the role of Alsace in French nationalist discourses during the period of German rule. This is followed by an overview of Frenchification methods in the immediate post-war period⁹ – identity cards, expulsions, and purification trials – and a brief discussion of previous historiography regarding Alsace and nationalism. In Chapter 3, I lay out the theoretical framework for this thesis in more detail. I explain the use of national belonging (as opposed to nationality or national identity) and the relevance of nested belonging in the Alsatian borderland. Moreover, I outline critiques of the civic/ethnic dichotomy constructed in much scholarship on nationalism, and the issue of minority rights in 'civic' France. Lastly, I discuss feminist approaches to national belonging that highlight women's and men's gendered ties to the national community and the importance of family as hierarchical institution that upholds hierarchies within the nation-state. At the same time, I will show that gendered constructions of national belonging were malleable in situations of conflict and instability.

⁹ Throughout this thesis 'post-war' refers to the period following the First World War rather than the time after the Second World War.

In Chapter 4, I contextualise the system of identity cards within German and French legal framings of citizenship and emphasise how transitional regulations diverged from citizenship law. The gendered implications of patrilineality and derivative citizenship, as well as military service as qualifier for citizenship and naturalisation, are central to this discussion. Furthermore, I highlight parallels between an ethnic vision ingrained in French politics regarding Alsace and French colonial rule which challenge the understanding of Alsatian regulations as exceptional divergence from French conceptions of nationhood. In Chapter 5, I examine the need to re-imagine national belonging in Alsace during the appeal processes. I draw attention to androcentric administrative processes and the gendered incentives to request re-classification. I stress the gendered nature of the central themes of origin and intermarriage on the one hand, and national sentiments and military service on the other. While appeal letters associated the former with local women's role as repositories of national culture, the latter became heavily linked to men's civic duties. In Chapter 6, I discuss how petitioners constructed their own and/or their parents' gendered nested belonging through emphasising local integration by virtue of having grown up in or married into the region. Moreover, I emphasise the importance of family: firstly, family appeals contested administrative efforts to distribute identity cards to individuals rather than family units; secondly, family ties made gendered claims to national belonging accessible for female and male appellants alike, who referred to their male and female relatives as guarantors for their entire family's national allegiance and belonging. Finally, I outline how principles of family unity, notions of descent and patriotism, and localising strategies created overlapping, nested, and conflicting layers of who belonged to the nation and why. I stress that not all these layers were equally accessible and useful to all members of the national community, with both gender and biographical background influencing who could and would use which ideas.

Ultimately, the establishment of the identity card system in immediate post-war Alsace and the subsequent appeal processes demonstrate that conceptions of national belonging were – to some extent – negotiable. Inclusion and exclusion from the national community were malleable and gendered constructions of the national community could be adapted in response to the needs of both the French state and of individual Alsatians. However, contestation in Alsace in 1918-19 also shows that national ambiguity was construed as threat to the nation-state and ‘suspicious’ individuals became vulnerable targets of assimilation or expulsion.

1. TRANSNATIONAL GENDER HISTORY

Throughout this thesis, I will combine various approaches that are not precise methods or tools, but rather enable different perspectives which highlight different facets of national belonging. The two major bodies of historical scholarship I am drawing from are gender history and transnational history.

In the first section of this chapter, I outline my use of gender as relational concept in order to show that national belonging both shaped and was shaped by gender relations between female and male family and community members. In the second section, I discuss how transnational perspectives challenge dominant national(ist) narratives. Moreover, I acknowledge the challenges and limitations posed by methodological nationalism and (un)translatability. In the third section, I underscore the usefulness of an entangled history approach and lay out my positionality and relation to Alsace as transnational space. I propose that multi-perspectivity is necessary to comprehend the different layers of national belonging below the surface of one-dimensional identity cards. This is an essential step to understand why and how different layers of national belonging could be invoked in different contexts. In this thesis, I show that French administrators and residents of Alsace interpreted national belonging in multiple ways for specific purposes, be it to impose national unity and Frenchify the region or to boost one's status and prospects in Alsace.

1.1 Gender history

Feminist perspectives

For my analysis of layered national belonging, I am drawing on feminist theory and gender history approaches. The concept of feminism is constantly in motion and re-interpreted by self-identifying feminists, women's rights activists, and opponents of feminism alike. In this thesis, I refer to three main characteristics of feminist theory identified by Mary Hawkesworth and Lisa

Disch: firstly, ‘efforts to denaturalize that which passes for difference,’ secondly, ‘efforts to challenge the aspiration to produce universal and impartial knowledge,’ and thirdly, ‘efforts to engage the complexity of power relations through intersectional analysis.’¹⁰

Gendered conceptions of nation and corresponding gendered duties and rights were not organic but purposefully constructed by state administrators and individual residents. The knowledge gained through the following analysis is significant in shaping our understanding of French and German nation-building. However, I by no means suggest that the exact processes of negotiation in 1919 Alsace could be found or were repeated in other contexts. In contrast, I will show that the divergence of Alsatian negotiating processes from French ideals underlines that gender relations and national belonging are not static, universally applicable categories. At the same time, the diverging gendered claims to national belonging in post-WW1 Alsace were not pursued at random; being recognised as member of the national community remained limited to those individuals issued with a certain identity card and whose appeal request were approved. Instead, civil-military administrators and individual petitioners in Alsace co-opted on multiple established notions of participation and inclusion in the nation in order to reach specific goals. I therefore not only establish that gendered access and status within the national community were subject to negotiation and change, but also *why* they were negotiated. For instance, the predominance of patrilineality in conferring national belonging was challenged in arguments that foregrounded mothers’ influence as cultural transmitters. While these conceptions of reproducing national boundaries clashed in this particular moment, they were both essential parts of gendered nationalist discourses.

Moreover, by emphasising the entanglement of legalistic top-down processes and individuals’ bottom-up responses, I want to challenge the epistemic privilege of historical accounts written

¹⁰ Hawkesworth and Disch, ‘Feminist Theory’, 4.

from one-dimensional, privileged, and often androcentric perspectives, which are for instance privileged in classic legal history of French and German citizenship.¹¹ Feminist perspectives demonstrate that still prevalent ideas of an objective historiography, in which historians overcome bias by using ‘scientific methods,’ obstruct historical research.¹² The myth of objectivity conceals that history can be written from various perspectives, all of which change our understanding of historical processes, experiences, and categories. In this thesis, I show that identity cards and national belonging were not conferred based on objective criteria but could in fact be negotiated by appealing to a multiplicity of narratives, such as having a claim to national belonging through military service, growing up in the local community, or harbouring Francophile sentiments. These strategies were not equally accessible to all individuals and still resulted in the exclusion of perceived outsiders. National belonging thus cannot be reconstructed in an objective manner, listing several invariable requirements. Instead I argue that subjective and dynamic negotiating processes played an essential role in shaping formal categories of belonging as well as individual experiences of inclusion in or exclusion from the community. While I attempt to incorporate several perspectives and foreground the multidimensionality of national belonging, I want to underline that this is not, and cannot be, a comprehensive account of national belonging in post-WWI Alsace.

Gender analysis

In this thesis I use gender as category of analysis to shed light on the gendered constructions of national belonging and gendered ties of women and men to the national community. Drawing on Joan Scott’s understanding of gender as ‘constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes’ and as ‘primary way of

¹¹ Hawkesworth and Disch, 6.

¹² See for example Bonnie Smith’s critique of conceptions of professionalised history as accurate ‘mirror’ of the past, Smith, ‘Introduction: Gender and the Mirror of History’, 1–2.

signifying relationships of power,’¹³ I consider gender a crucial concept for better understanding how belonging to a national community was layered both hierarchically and relationally. Importantly, this does not mean that women had a ‘gendered’ position in contrast with a male ‘default.’ The following gender analysis will show that in the Alsatian appeal processes in 1919 individual petitioners of any gender relied on multiple notions of femininities and masculinities to claim their place in the national community.

When talking about ‘women’ and ‘men,’ the risk of essentialism is never far. In this thesis, I focus on gender differences regarding citizenship regulations and bottom-up conceptions of national belonging which were based on a binary and heteronormative system, which classified the population into ‘women’ and ‘men.’ However, women’s and men’s access to the nation(-state) was constructed in a highly normative manner, i.e. certain criteria for inclusion and exclusion proclaimed an ideal femininity and masculinity (e.g. being a loyal wife on the one hand, and being the head of the household and serving in the military on the other). These prescribed gender norms were not contested and were adapted to political and social circumstances. Scott rightly emphasises that when re-creating a binary opposition of male/female or masculine/feminine ‘subsequent history is written as if these normative positions were the product of social consensus rather than of conflict.’¹⁴ In this thesis I thus highlight the notion of ongoing contestation, not only of national belonging but also of gender relations. ‘Women’ and ‘men’ are not fixed, universal categories but constituted through ‘historically changing gender norms and social practices.’¹⁵ They are hence specific to a geopolitical, social, and historical context. I will analyse how gender relations were reinforced and adapted by the French administration and Alsatian residents to fit their respective needs.

¹³ Scott, ‘Gender’, 1067.

¹⁴ Scott, 1067–68.

¹⁵ Daskalova and Zimmermann, ‘Women’s and Gender History’, 278; also see de Haan, ‘Writing Inter/Transnational History’, 503–4.

Nation and gender

The gendered expectations imposed on Alsatian women and men in 1919 were aspirational and do not reflect the lived experiences of every Alsatian. Moreover, national belonging was not simply divided into ‘women’s’ and ‘men’s’ versions. Various social categories (such as gender, race, class, and religion) are interlocking and mutually constitutive.¹⁶ Among these, gender is not necessarily the primary organiser of power relations. Jeanne Boydston’s claim that ‘the primaryness of gender in a given situation should be one of our questions, rather than one of our assumptions’ is essential for analysing gender/nation relations.¹⁷ Notions of inclusion in and exclusion from the national community (e.g. being ‘citizen’ or ‘foreigner’) have a major impact on power relations. When analysing hierarchical layers of belonging in Alsace, I therefore explore hierarchies based on various factors – among others gender, descent and local belonging, and performative patriotism.

In this study, I am focusing on the intersection of national and gender hierarchies. Class, religion, and race certainly affected the constructions and consequences of (not) belonging to the national community. Intermarriages were for instance more common among the working class than in the bourgeoisie resident in the regional capital of Strasbourg.¹⁸ Tensions between Catholic long-term Alsatian residents, Southern Germans, and Protestant Prussians influenced which Old German immigrants were more likely to be integrated into local society, and Jewish Alsations had a different legal and social status to their Christian contemporaries. Imperial citizenship systems and highly racialised discourses surrounding soldiers of colour from French African colonies being employed in the occupied Rhineland in the interwar period suggest that the national community was largely conceived as white and limited to the

¹⁶ Pierson, ‘Introduction’, 2.

¹⁷ Boydston, ‘Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis’, 576.

¹⁸ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 108–9.

metropole.¹⁹ I will pay attention to intersections of power imbalances, for example when connecting the French ethnic approach applied to Alsace with French colonial practices. However, my analysis of these interlocking hierarchies is in part limited by the information provided in the archival material. The administrative forms and appeal letters analysed in Chapters 5 and 6 for instance recorded individuals' gender and marital status as well as their profession, yet their religion and race were not registered.

1.2 Trans/national history

Transnational perspectives

To analyse the processes of re-imagining national belonging in the Alsatian borderland, I am writing from a transnational perspective. According to Axel Körner, 'thinking transnationally means to trace people, ideas and goods across national boundaries, and to rethink established spatial categories of historical analysis in order to engage with hitherto neglected transnational entities.'²⁰ Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönpflug underline that in contrast with 'traditional comparative historiography, which examines above all fixed structures and regularities, transnational history is concerned with movement, change, and dynamic processes.'²¹ Transnational history provides a fruitful perspective on the negotiating process between the French administration and inhabitants of Alsace because it challenges the nation-state as primary unit of historical analysis, foregrounds cross-border interactions and processes, and underscores unequal power relations.

Neither the history of French-ruled Alsace nor the history of French nation-making should take into consideration French national historiography alone. Ruth Roach Pierson rightly argues that recognising the interaction between unequal units is especially important for the history of

¹⁹ Wigger, *The 'Black Horror on the Rhine'*, 1.

²⁰ Körner, 'Transnational History', 265.

²¹ Janz and Schönpflug, *Gender History in Transnational Perspective*, 4.

nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism, considering that national identities as ‘imagined community of shared sameness’ are achieved through ‘violent suppression, exclusion, or denial of difference and conflict.’²² In this thesis I highlight that supposedly civic and assimilationist notions of Frenchness suppressed the existence of minority groups and regional particularities in Alsace. Moreover, I suggest that it is essential to contextualise constructions of French national belonging in the French Metropole with French colonial practices.

Studying the construction of national belonging risks reinforcing the primacy of nationality and the national unit. Körner for instance warns that ‘any history which makes the nation or national identity the sole focus of analysis risks diminishing human experience.’²³ While making the nation (or rather belonging to the national community) the central subject of my analysis, I highlight through both feminist and transnational approaches that there was no such thing as a uniform ‘nation’ which existed in isolation but that different constructions of national belonging were shaped by experiences of national conflict as well as transnational interaction.

Gender history and transnational history complement each other in multiple ways. Both challenge previous historiography and its focus on male agents and masculinist structures. Clare Midgley, Alison Twells, and Julie Carlier propose feminist history, especially the history of women’s movements, as a pioneering site for the development of transnational approaches.²⁴

Methodologically, both approaches of history highlight the importance of multi-perspectivity and interactions, and the re-reading of ‘previously explored sources from a new (...) point of view.’ Johanna Gehmacher further underlines that ‘this questioning of pre-established entities connects transnational history and women’s and gender history.’²⁵ With this thesis, I link

²² Pierson, ‘Introduction’, 4.

²³ Körner, ‘Transnational History’, 289.

²⁴ Midgley, Twells, and Carlier, *Women in Transnational History*, 2.

²⁵ Gehmacher, ‘In/Visible Transfers’, 10.

gender and transnational scholarship to demonstrate that gendered layers of national belonging are not constructed in national isolation but in transnational spaces.

Methodological nationalism and translation

Even approaches that criticise the dominance of the national unit risk perpetuating a methodological nationalism. According to Gehmacher, ‘education systems that support a hierarchy of languages as well as long-standing archival practices have institutionalized hierarchies that inevitably lead to methodological nationalism.’²⁶ Midgley, Twells, and Carlier make the important observation that ‘collected, preserved and organised according to national systems and practices, sources are housed in archives and museums that reflect the foundational relationship between the discipline of academic history and nineteenth-century nation building.’²⁷ Thomas Welskopp calls nation-states ‘easily accessible data container(s)’ and argues that especially empirical studies rely on national statistic offices.²⁸ In the case of Alsace, the primary material analysed in this thesis is preserved in the departmental archives of Bas-Rhin, located in Strasbourg. It is therefore integrated in the French administrative division, reflecting the present-day status of Alsace as part of France. Moreover, analysing the classification of Old German and French Alsatian individuals first by the German, then by the French administration without perpetuating these categories poses another methodological challenge and is possible only to a limited degree.

Language poses another difficulty to researching transnational history. ‘Scholars’ language competences and limitations impact the scope and emphasis of their research, giving it a tendency to run within the linguistic zones created by empires and prioritise the use of official sources written in the language of governance over sources in local vernaculars, as well as

²⁶ Gehmacher, 8.

²⁷ Midgley, Twells, and Carlier, *Women in Transnational History*, 5.

²⁸ Welskopp, ‘Comparative History’.

exposing the difficulties and inadequacies of translation.’²⁹ Linguistic limitations of the researcher and the dominance of the languages of colonial powers contribute to a recreation of power imbalances. Comparative history at times circumvents the former issue through edited collections and multi-author projects, however this easily leads to an additive approach rather than a transnational perspective. As a German native speaker with a high proficiency in French, I was able to access material written in both French and German, i.e. both French administrative regulations and letters written by local German-speakers. However, my linguistic-conceptual understanding of German and French ideas remains unbalanced. Considering much of the Alsatian population were not native French speakers at the end of the First World War, the bilingual primary material demonstrates that translation also posed a problem for the historical subjects studied in this thesis. In addition, as Astrid Swenson remarks, ‘a transnational approach is not only confronted with asymmetries between categories in different times but also with asymmetries between cultures which remain often untranslatable.’³⁰ Translation always involves interpretation and not all connotations of certain concepts can be fully translated into a different (linguistic) context. Körner for instance argues that ‘a community of art lovers (...) is at best an idea. They might share a love for Raphael or Shakespeare, but what a specific work of art means differs according to the context of reception, which is determined by local conditions.’³¹

Another challenge to understanding context-specific ideas is my use of English as academic and analytical language, requiring a further level of translation. Nonetheless, translation is inevitable in a transnational academic environment. In this thesis, I have translated all primary material written in French and German myself; for transparency I however provide all original quotations in the footnotes. Following Gehmacher’s suggestion that ‘an approach that actively

²⁹ Midgley, Twells, and Carlier, *Women in Transnational History*, 5.

³⁰ Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage*, 9.

³¹ Körner, ‘Transnational History’, 270.

addresses slippages of meaning instead of avoiding the semantic uncertainties that so often occur in the interstices between languages can open up new perspectives,’³² I put specific emphasis on the differing translations and understandings of citizenship and nationality in French, German, and English. Such differentiation is relevant to acknowledge the impact of translation on our understanding of national belonging as well as to critically confront the influence of English as dominant academic language on our analyses.

National indifference

According to Tara Zahra, “‘imagined communities’ may have become so ubiquitous in historical research that we have inadvertently become blind to individuals who remained altogether aloof to the nation’s appeal.’³³ This warning against a narrow research focus on nations as imagined community works complimentary to Pierson’s emphasis on the suppression and exclusion of difference within national communities (cited above). Zahra offers an insightful approach to studying questions of national belonging, proposing to use national indifference as category of analysis. She criticises historians of nationalism for analysing ‘the contested content of nationalist ideologies and cultures without questioning the extent to which those ideologies resonated among their audiences.’³⁴ As a consequence, those individuals and groups who did not express nationalist sentiments remain side-lined in historiography. Indifference towards nationalism or national identification has been pathologized by nationalist movements on the one hand and understood as ‘premodern relic’ by prominent modernist nationalism scholars on the other.³⁵ Not recognising national indifference risks serious scholarly shortcomings. Framing national indifference as premodern

³² Gehmacher, ‘In/Visible Transfers’, 17.

³³ Zahra, ‘Imagined Noncommunities’, 96.

³⁴ Zahra, 111–12.

³⁵ The assumption that modernising forces wiped out national indifference was central to the modernist paradigm, established among other by Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, Ernest Gellner, and Eugen Weber, see Zahra, 98.

or exception that confirms the rule perpetuates a teleological narrative of the inevitable rise of nation-states and national consciousness and misses an important element of engaging with nationalist discourses.

Using national indifference as category of analysis when studying how state administrators and individuals constructed national belonging might appear antithetical. However, in less contested times than the German annexation of 1871 or the First World War, national indifference may have played a significant role in the daily lives of many Alsatians. Acknowledging that national indifference existed is an important step when examining why both the French state and Alsatian residents did feel obliged to (re)define their national community in 1918 and 1919. As Zahra rightly observes, ‘once citizens were forced to register their nationality in order to exercise basic civil rights such as the right to vote or to a primary school education, remaining on the national sidelines was no longer simple.’³⁶ Even though she focuses on practices within the Habsburg empire, Zahra also explicitly points to parallels with classification of the Alsatian population via identity cards, stressing that ‘national indifference, and attempts to eradicate it, were not confined to eastern Europe.’³⁷

National indifference is not my primary category of analysis. However, I suggest that national ambiguity in Alsace was a major reason why French administrators were suspicious of the Alsatian population and proceeded to identify such ambiguity through different identity cards. Not despite but precisely because of potential national indifference and ambiguity, Alsatians were compelled to (re)imagine themselves as French. Some Alsatians’ ability to adapt to the changing circumstances and claim their belonging to the new national community underlines that national belonging was partially negotiable. Yet, the fact that ‘mixed origin’ Alsatians were required to justify their belonging – not simply as a matter of national pride but because

³⁶ Zahra, 101.

³⁷ Zahra, 108.

their identity card had a direct impact on their daily lives – demonstrates that groups and individuals whose ties to the national community are questioned cannot always afford to remain nationally indifferent. In short, claiming that national belonging does not matter is a privilege of those who are not excluded from it.

1.3 Entangled history

Histoire croisée and positionality

Drawing on comparative history and transfer studies, Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann propose the approach of *histoire croisée* (or entangled history) to study intersections. Werner and Zimmermann highlight the reciprocal interaction and modification of objects of comparison. They promote ‘a multidimensional approach that acknowledges plurality and the complex configurations that result from it. Accordingly, entities and objects of research are not merely considered in relation to one another but also *through* one another, in terms of relationships, interactions, and circulation.’³⁸ *Histoire croisée* hence constitutes a fruitful approach for gender as well as transnational historical research, laying emphasis on ‘a multiplicity of possible viewpoints.’³⁹ In this thesis, I use the notion of entanglement to look into multiple layers of national belonging (family, local community, origin, patriotism) as well as interconnected processes of constructing national belonging (legal regulations, transitional orders, appeal cases).

Furthermore, Werner and Zimmermann underscore the entanglement of the researcher in their work, arguing that it is impossible for an observer to have an external and symmetrical point of view. Their assertion that ‘scholars are always, in one manner or another, engaged in the field of observation’ and their subsequent call for self-reflexivity opposes the idea that historians can produce an unbiased historiography. As Francisca de Haan has rightly pointed

³⁸ Werner and Zimmermann, ‘Beyond Comparison’, 38.

³⁹ Werner and Zimmermann, 32.

out, the notion of self-reflexivity ‘strongly resonates with feminist studies, including women’s history, which have always criticized the professed objectivity of mainstream scholarship – which in fact was biased towards a male-centric and Western-centric perspective – and (at least from the 1980s) have argued for situated knowledge and self-reflexive approaches.’⁴⁰

Positionality informs the choice of research topic and analytical interpretations. The fact that German is my native language, not French, and that I was raised in Germany, not France, affect my understanding of the discourses and cultural implications of the present primary material. Discussing geographically nested identities, David B. Knight asks his readers to consider ‘where is “home” and how does the perspective from that place influence your geographical view of the world?’⁴¹ Having grown up near the border triangle of Germany, Switzerland, and France (near the Alsatian border) and my experience of everyday cross-border interactions have fuelled my interest in dynamics of national and regional belonging in borderlands. My position in an academic transnational space moreover affects my thinking about what belonging in changing national environments means. Janz and Schönplflug emphasise that ‘not only historical agents, but also historians, need to conceive of their thinking and acting as a border-crossing process.’⁴² This thesis is the result of two years of study in Hungary and Austria, archival visits in France, writing in English, working with French and German sources and predominantly English and German scholarship. Crossing borders is an essential but privileged part of my research, (financially) encouraged by my current universities. My own transnational positionality, the transnational practices within Alsace, and my transnational perspective on the research topic are thus deeply entangled with each other.

⁴⁰ de Haan, ‘Writing Inter/Transnational History’, 509.

⁴¹ Knight, ‘Afterword: Nested Identities’, 325.

⁴² Janz and Schönplflug, *Gender History in Transnational Perspective*, 19; Midgley et al also mention ‘interconnections between personal life histories and trajectories of scholarly research’, pointing towards the transnational academic histories of their edited volume’s contributors, Midgley, Twells, and Carlier, *Women in Transnational History*, 3.

Transnational spaces

The borderland of Alsace can be understood as transnational space ‘that bridge[s] boundaries and incorporate[s] trace elements of the different contexts from which [it] evolved.’ Janz and Schönpflug stress that ‘transnational spaces are also likely to obey their own rules and to develop specific features that cannot be traced back to their national origins.’⁴³ Due to its centuries-old role as cultural mediator between France and Germany, Alsace has incorporated both ‘French’ and ‘German’ elements – the very reason why both states justified their claim to the territory in the 1870s. According to Gehmacher, ‘to develop and persist, transnational spaces require that people engage in “doing transnational” in some way, usually in the shape of various practices.’⁴⁴ Cross-border migration and interaction, especially intermarriage, are forms of such transnational practices. In regard to the Bohemian Lands, Zahra suggests that in families resulting from intermarriages between Czech-speakers and German-speakers ‘bilingualism and fluid national loyalties were the norm.’⁴⁵ Many intermarried families in Alsace in fact spoke the same language, a German dialect. Moreover, under German rule marriages across the border to neighbouring states may not have been perceived as much as border crossings by locals. However, in 1918 and 1919 these practices were perceived as disrupting national fault lines.

The contestation of national belonging through classifications and appeals in immediate post-war period demonstrates that conflict was very much present in transnational spaces. Körner rightly remarks that ‘historians of war and conflict fear that transnational history proposes an idealistic humanism which over-emphasises the friendlier aspects of human relations. Contrary to that, transnational communities are often based on exclusion of and aggression towards

⁴³ Janz and Schönpflug, *Gender History in Transnational Perspective*, 4.

⁴⁴ Gehmacher, ‘In/Visible Transfers’, 12.

⁴⁵ Zahra, ‘Imagined Noncommunities’, 103.

others.’⁴⁶ Zahra stresses that national indifference or ambiguity did turn ‘so-called hermaphrodites or amphibians from the enemies of nationalist pedagogues to the heroes of multicultural fantasies.’ Rather, ‘in a world of national hierarchies, identity cards, and national ascription, many were simply talking back to nationalists in nationalist terms.’⁴⁷ It is important not to impose a romanticised vision of cross-border harmony and anti-nationalism on the processes of conflict and contestation in post-WW1 Alsace. The re-drawing of national borders (geographically and ideologically) and petitioners’ proclamations of national belonging in 1918-19 should conversely be considered against the backdrop of transnational practices and national ambiguity. Intermarriage and national ambiguity were a major motivation behind the new delineations of the national community and the distribution of identity cards, which made Alsatian residents’ insistence that they were part of said community necessary.

Entangled perspectives

In order to better grasp the manifold dimensions through which national belonging has been constructed in Alsace following the First World War, I am combining multiple perspectives, drawing on methodological approaches from gender and transnational history. Firstly, I compare top-down legalistic constructions of citizenship and identity cards by French (and German) authorities with bottom-up conceptions of national belonging by individual Alsatians. Secondly, I am employing a transnational perspective which highlights cross-border entanglements and considers Alsace as central space for interaction and conflict between two nation-states as well as shaped by local initiatives. Thirdly, I underscore the gendered constructions and performances of national belonging to show that ties to the national community were defined and claimed differently by women and men.

⁴⁶ Körner, ‘Transnational History’, 271.

⁴⁷ Zahra, ‘Imagined Noncommunities’, 114.

2. ALSACE IN BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY

Located at the Franco-German border, the region of Alsace was (re)annexed repeatedly by France and Germany and gained an extraordinary symbolic role within both nationalisms. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century claims to the territory were fuelled by nationalist rhetoric and conceptions of French and German nationhood. The idealised images of Alsace as inherently French or German however did not capture the local experiences of cross-border encounters, intermarriage, and nationalist conflict in a transnational space. Following the First World War and the so-called ‘return’ of the region to France, the French civil-military administration classified the population of Alsace according to ethnic and moral criteria to identify, marginalise, and expel ‘German’ elements. This chapter offers a historical overview of Franco-German conflicts and practices of nationalisation in the period leading up to and immediately following the First World War.

In the first section, I outline Alsace’s symbolic role in French nationalist discourses following its annexation by the newly proclaimed German Empire. I contrast this nationalist imaginary with the impact of Germanisation policies, migration, and intermarriage. In the second section, I give a detailed account of Frenchification measures in 1918 and 1919, highlighting the distribution of identity cards, expulsions, and the establishment of so-called triage committees in charge of punishing Alsatians suspected of Germanophile sentiments, actions, or questionable origin. In the third section, I lay out major historiographical approaches to national belonging in Alsace and pinpoint how this thesis is situated within this scholarship – namely attention to nationalisation practices, clashes between national uniformity and regional particularism, and distinct gender roles.

2.1 The Alsatian Question

German annexation and intellectual debates

French and German conceptions of nationhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were constructed interdependently. The Franco-German War of 1870-71, which resulted in the proclamation of the German Empire and the German annexation of Alsace and significant parts of Lorraine, deeply affected the self-image of both states.⁴⁸ Demands to ‘re-conquer’ Alsace-Lorraine, which had been part of the Holy Roman Empire prior to its annexation under Louis XIV, appeared in the German press from August 1870 on.⁴⁹ Throughout the war, politicians and intellectuals on either side had laid claim to the territory, proclaiming its supposed French or German nationality. Exchanges of public letters between the academics Theodor Mommsen, Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, David Friedrich Strauß, and Ernest Renan legitimising their respective state’s claim to Alsace-Lorraine have gained much scholarly attention, oft-cited to showcase that ‘the question of Alsace-Lorraine led to the ideological accentuation of the French political against the German ethnocultural understanding of nationhood.’⁵⁰

The intellectual debate of 1870 and 1871 is thus foundational to dichotomous civic-ethnic conceptions of French and German nationhood. At first glance, the French descent-based classification of Alsace in 1918 and 1919, central to this thesis, appears as major shift in the French national self-image towards an ethnic understanding of Frenchness. Yet a closer look at the entangled exchange of letters shows that both Renan and Fustel de Coulanges included ethnic elements in their construction of Frenchness. Renan’s definition of nationalities as ‘natural groups determined by race, history, and the will of populations’ still acknowledged

⁴⁸ Most discourses nationalisation policies following the German annexation of 1871 and the ‘return’ to France in 1918 concern both Alsace and Lorraine; however, in this study I focus exclusively on Alsace based on the primary material gained from Alsatian archives.

⁴⁹ Jurt, ‘Langue et nation’, 6–7.

⁵⁰ Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 12; also see Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 59; Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 6–7.

race and history as influential factors, simply adding political choice as criterion.⁵¹ Romantic notions of a common past and nationalist sentiments underlie Fustel de Coulanges' proclamation that 'men feel in their heart that they are a common people when they have a community of ideas, of interests, of affections, of memories and of hopes.'⁵² In contrast, the Treaty of Frankfurt of 1871 included an option clause allowing Alsatians to choose French citizenship under the condition they emigrated to interior France within one year.⁵³ While this option was in practice limited to those with sufficient resources and the willingness to leave the region they inhabited, it included a voluntarist notion of citizenship despite dominant ethno-cultural conceptions of German nationhood. The debates surrounding the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 were fundamental to Franco-German responses to the Alsatian Question and remained influential well into the twentieth century. The entanglement of 'civic' and 'ethnic' elements in this early debate contextualised the shift towards an ethnic classification of the Alsatian population in 1918-1919 and prevents us from perceiving the identity card system as a unique exception from the French republican, civic norm.

Immigration and intermarriage

After its annexation by the German Empire in 1871, Alsace-Lorraine became an imperial territory rather than a proper federal state and was therefore ruled by an imperial governor (*Statthalter*).⁵⁴ Through the option clause of the Treaty of Frankfurt, over 50,000 Alsatians left the region by October 1872; nearly 100,000 more emigrated during the period of German rule.⁵⁵ In the following years and decades, a systematic immigration from Imperial Germany ensued, supported by the German government to transform Alsace into a German territory.⁵⁶

⁵¹ 'des groupes naturels déterminés par la race, l'histoire et la volonté des populations,' Renan, *Histoire et parole*, 640.

⁵² 'Les hommes sentent dans leur cœur qu'ils sont un même peuple lorsqu'ils ont une communauté d'idées, d'intérêts, d'affections, de souvenirs et d'espérances,' Fustel de Coulanges, *Questions Historiques*, 509.

⁵³ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 7.

⁵⁴ Harvey, 'Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?', 538.

⁵⁵ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 7.

⁵⁶ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 13.

In total, around 120,000 immigrants from Imperial Germany settled in the region.⁵⁷ While the proportion of Prussian administrators was higher in the capital of Strasbourg, many of the immigrants came from neighbouring southern German regions.⁵⁸ In contrast to the dichotomous categorisation into French Alsatian locals and Old German immigrants persistent in historiography on Alsace, the German Empire was a recent and still diverse conglomeration and some of the immigrant groups more easily integrated into local society than others.⁵⁹ In addition to resettlement, Germanisation measures included compulsory primary education, compulsory military service, the renaming of towns and streets, and public celebration of national holidays.⁶⁰

One central means and symptom of integration was the high proportion of intermarriages between Old German immigrants and native Alsatians. For François Uberfill, intermarriages provide indications of the individual and collective attitude of the Alsatian population towards the politics of Imperial Germany. In his case study of Strasbourg, around 10,000 of 48,000 marriages concluded between 1871 and 1914 were between an Old German immigrant and an Alsatian. Gender and class played major roles in the makeup of the intermarriages. Firstly, around two-thirds of the intermarriages were between an Alsatian woman and an Old German man. Secondly, the largest proportion of intermarriages (around 60 percent) were among workers and artisans, with many of the Old German spouses coming from the neighbouring states of Baden, Württemberg, and Palatinate.⁶¹ ‘National antagonisms are certainly as lively in the working class as in the bourgeoisie, but they seem less lasting. Workers share the same way of life, the same jobs (...),’ Uberfill proposes.⁶² Tensions between the native Alsatian population and imperial German immigrants eased a few decades after the annexation (even

⁵⁷ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 7.

⁵⁸ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 11–13.

⁵⁹ Uberfill, 19–20.

⁶⁰ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 6–7.

⁶¹ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 11, 23, 27.

⁶² Uberfill, 109–109.

though they did not fully disappear). Uberfill pinpoints 1890 as turning point from annexation to autonomy and highlights the revival of Alsatian culture in the 1890s. A new generation of Alsations, raised under the German regime, was only exposed to French influence through their parents' generation as intermediaries.⁶³ Moreover, in contrast to a Francophone bourgeoisie, the vast majority of the population of Alsace spoke a German dialect.⁶⁴ Old Germans and French Alsations were not always two clearly distinguishable, isolated societies. Shortly before the outbreak of the First World War 'approximately 300,000 individuals labelled German lived in Alsace and Lorraine (out of a population of 1,874,014 in 1910), many deeply integrated in local society.'⁶⁵

These circumstances neither equated with completely harmonious relations nor with full (political and cultural) integration into the German Empire. The in-between status of Alsace was forcefully demonstrated by the treatment of Alsations during the war. Suspensions towards Alsatian loyalties on part of the German authorities became particularly clear during the First World War, when Alsace became subjected to harsh military rule, censorship, limited freedom of movement, and a ban on the French language in public.⁶⁶ Such 'doubts about [the Alsations'] patriotic trustworthiness' was reflected in French wartime practices, as thousands of Alsations and Lorrainers living on the French territory were interned and around 8,000 Alsations deported from parts of 'liberated' southern Alsace in the early war years.⁶⁷

Alsace in the French national imaginary

As mentioned earlier, Alsace as border and borderland held a 'unique symbolic importance' in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century French nationalism. Alsatian emigres in

⁶³ Uberfill, 124–27.

⁶⁴ In the census of 1910, 87.2 percent of the population indicated German or a German dialect as their native language, Boswell, 'From Liberation to Purge Trials in the "Mythic Provinces"', 131.

⁶⁵ Zahra, 'The "Minority Problem" and National Classification', 149.

⁶⁶ Boswell, 'From Liberation to Purge Trials in the "Mythic Provinces"', 133.

⁶⁷ Boswell, 134.

Paris further promoted the mourning of the so-called ‘lost provinces’ throughout the period of German rule.⁶⁸ From the outbreak of the First World War on, the ‘return’ of Alsace-Lorraine became ‘France’s most talked about war aim.’⁶⁹ French state authorities discussed the re-annexation throughout the war, with the main concern being the removal of all German influences. In April 1915, Premier René Viviani established the ‘Conference of Alsace and Lorraine’ which included high-ranking civil servants, French politicians, and Alsatian émigrés. The conference grappled with the difficulty of how to distinguish ‘Alsations of French origin’ and ‘German immigrants,’ coming to no clear agreement or plan for reintegration.⁷⁰

After the ‘liberation’ of Alsace in late 1918, the French administration hence imposed inconsistent, unsystematic measures. As official guidelines and instructions were only established gradually in the early months of 1919, official and unofficial Frenchification attempts were entangled in a complex process. From November 1918 until July 1924 the process of Frenchification was led by the civil-military administration of Alsace (*Commissariat Général*). Re-structured in March 1919 to become part of the *Conseil des Ministres*, the commissariat was headed by Alexandre Millerand from March 1919 to January 1920, who was replaced by Gabriel Alapetite.⁷¹ The administration’s nationalising programmes included reorganising administrative bodies and legislation which differed significantly from those of interior France.

The ‘return’ of those regions to the French state was celebrated enthusiastically by both French state authorities and the French public. This enthusiasm built on images of Alsace in French propaganda and public discourses. Zahra for instance notes ‘the re-annexation was celebrated

⁶⁸ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 5.

⁶⁹ Carrol, 1.

⁷⁰ Carrol, 54–55; Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 216; Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 137.

⁷¹ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 193–95.

in 1918 as a return of ‘lost children’ to an adoring French motherland.’⁷² The dominant use of the term ‘return’ rather than ‘re-annexation’ underlined the official French perspective that Alsace was an inherently French region which had been annexed unjustly. However, the French image of Alsace clashed with the region French administrators encountered after the war. The discrepancy between French popular imaginary and the Alsatian experience of German rule is underscored by several historians as a ‘paradoxical situation of a nonfrancophone and culturally distinct region being invested with a degree of patriotic symbolism on a scale known to no other French province.’⁷³ Alsations who celebrated the French troops in November 1918 were ‘conscious participants in a collective fiction that had been inculcated in a generation of patriotic Frenchmen: that Alsace, despite a half-century of German rule, despite the fact that its inhabitants spoke a German dialect impenetrable to French ears, and despite (or perhaps because of) the quaint, picturesque images presented by its villages and their inhabitants, had always remained essentially French.’⁷⁴ At the end of the First World War, French authorities were faced with the challenge of addressing the gap between inherent Frenchness and the effects of German presence for almost 50 years.

2.2 Frenchification

Categorising Alsace: identity cards

The citizenship policy of the French civil-military administration reconfigured understandings of being German, French, and Alsatian. Laird Boswell and Alison Carrol both refer to three major, interconnected steps: firstly, the categorisation of the population according to their ethnic background; secondly, the expulsion of ‘Germans’; thirdly, the punishment of Alsations

⁷² Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 149; also see Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 51.

⁷³ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 132; also see Prott, *The Politics of Self-Determination*, 60.

⁷⁴ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 537.

(and Lorrainers) suspected of pro-German sentiments or collaboration prior to the French re-annexation.⁷⁵

For the first step, the administration systematically divided the population of Alsace in four categories by distributing identity cards ranging from A to D to all adults and children over the age of 15.⁷⁶ Such classification of foreigners and Alsatians built on wartime surveillance systems. From April 1917 on, all foreigners in France over the age of 15 had to carry identity cards.⁷⁷ Furthermore, thousands of Alsatians and Lorrainers living on French territory were interned after the outbreak of the First World War and Alsatians from ‘liberated’ southern Alsace were deported to interior France after 1914.⁷⁸

The identity card system for post-war Alsace was officially announced in a decree of 14 December 1918. An official clarification was printed in a local newspaper a few days later, explaining that each person was to be classified individually and family members could therefore obtain different identity cards.⁷⁹ Category A was issued to French citizens and to persons born in Alsace-Lorraine whose parents were ‘of French origin.’⁸⁰ Carrol and Uberfill both explain that ‘French origin’ meant those individuals who ‘had held French citizenship before 1871 but had become German through the Treaty of Frankfurt.’⁸¹ Category B was issued to persons born in Alsace-Lorraine with only one parent ‘of French origin’ – primarily children of intermarriages between French Alsatians and German immigrants. Category C was issued to citizens or subjects of ‘non-enemy states’ and their children. Category D was issued to

⁷⁵ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 140; Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 57.

⁷⁶ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 142.

⁷⁷ Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 150.

⁷⁸ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 134.

⁷⁹ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 548.

⁸⁰ Arrêté du 14 décembre 1918, AVES 503 FI 72.

⁸¹ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 57–58; Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 216.

citizens or subjects of an enemy state and their children (even if they were born in Alsace).⁸² The identity cards were valid between the ‘liberation’ of Alsace and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 16 June 1919. In this period, inhabitants of Alsace were not formally French citizens (as the annexation of the region by France had not been formalised) – the identity cards therefore did not confer citizenship but regulated the rights of local inhabitants in this interim period.⁸³

The cards were required for travel, currency exchange, electoral participation, and unofficially for employment. Movement to Germany and France as well as within Alsace was limited for B-, C-, and D-cardholders. D-cardholders received unfavourable exchange rates for German marks. Without an A-card many people struggled to find jobs in the civil service, post office, or railway services. Furthermore, D-cardholders faced a much higher risk of deportation.⁸⁴ In Alsace and Moselle (the part of Lorraine that had been annexed by the German Empire in 1871) around 59 percent of the distributed cards were model A, around 10 percent model B, around 3 percent model C, and around 28 percent model D.⁸⁵ The proportion of D-cardholders was much higher in Strasbourg and other cities than in rural areas: whereas Strasbourg had 25 percent D-cards and Wissembourg 32 percent, the average for Strasbourg-Campagne (the rural surroundings of Strasbourg) was only 7 percent.⁸⁶ This difference reflects the higher number of German immigrants in urban areas. Both Strasbourg and Wissembourg were located immediately at the border to states of the German Empire (Baden and Palatinate, respectively). While retrospectively we know that the identity cards did not determine French citizenship (citizenship was regulated separately in the Treaty of Versailles), at the time inhabitants of

⁸² Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 58; Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 216.

⁸³ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 142–44.

⁸⁴ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 58; Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 139; Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 217; Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 548.

⁸⁵ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 58.

⁸⁶ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 217.

Alsace could not be sure of this. Boswell explains ‘it was thought, not without reason, that identity cards would have a direct bearing on citizenship in the future.’⁸⁷ Both Boswell and Carrol convincingly argue that because of these concerns, ‘the card system served to reinforce importance of ethnicity in the minds of the population.’⁸⁸

Purifying Alsace: expulsions

Following the re-annexation of Alsace, many Old German citizens living in the region left. According to Boswell, more than 110,000 Germans moved to Germany in between late 1918 and late 1920.⁸⁹ This emigration ranged from ‘voluntary departures’ to forced expulsions and deportations and played a significant role in French plans to remove German influence. So-called voluntary repatriation was often the consequence of immense pressure placed on suspect individuals, as D-cardholders faced discrimination and struggled to find employment.⁹⁰ A first wave of emigration in winter 1918-19 included massive expulsions and at times violent deportations over the Rhine bridge from Strasbourg (Alsace) to Kehl (Baden). Initially, deportation warnings were only issued 24 hours before a deportation until notice was extended to 15 days in January 1919.⁹¹ Uberfill compares these mass expulsions, along with imprisonment and arbitrary measures taken by the French political and military authorities in 1918-19 with similar processes in 1944-45. The term *épuration* used by him and Boswell literally translates to ‘purification’ or ‘purge.’⁹² In contrast, in archival registries in the *Archives départementales du Bas-Rhin* this term appears only regarding post-1944 processes. Zahra more explicitly connects these practices of expulsion, in combination with other citizenship policies discussed in this chapter, with ethnic cleansing.⁹³ David Allen Harvey and Carrol

⁸⁷ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 143.

⁸⁸ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 58; also see Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 143.

⁸⁹ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 141.

⁹⁰ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 60.

⁹¹ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 219–23.

⁹² Uberfill, 15; Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’.

⁹³ Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 139.

suggest that the administration took this opportunity to also expel ‘potential troublemakers,’ including for instance suspected prostitutes and beggars, pointing to a further dimension of social cleansing.⁹⁴

The mass emigration of Old German citizens and their descendants was not the accumulation of individual decisions to leave French-ruled Alsace. Rather, it was the desired product of French efforts to turn Alsace into a French region. From November 1918 on, major bodies of Germanisation, such as the university community, architects, and the clergy were prohibited to work and/or expelled.⁹⁵ German civil servants, including schoolteachers, administrators, railroad workers, and pastors, were among the first targets of exclusive Frenchification measures.⁹⁶

Punishing Alsace: separation trials

The French civil-military administration treated even French Alsatians with suspicion, and punished them for pro-German actions and sentiments. For this purpose, so called *commissions de triage*, ‘selection’ or ‘sorting’ committees, were ‘established in each district to investigate individuals whose loyalties were suspect, who could then be exonerated, placed under surveillance, detained or expelled from France.’⁹⁷ Ideas for such committees had emerged in 1914 for recently ‘liberated’ parts of southern Alsace, and came into effect for the entire region in December 1918. Official guidelines were only issued on 24 January 1919, and procedures remained inconsistent. For instance, while some committees worked solely based on denunciations, others gathered additional information from the police. Only on 18 February 1919, more formal instructions were enacted which classified investigated Alsatians into three categories: no action to be taken, questionable (placed under surveillance), and suspect

⁹⁴ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 58; Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 541, 547.

⁹⁵ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 324.

⁹⁶ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 141.

⁹⁷ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 541.

(detained or deported).⁹⁸ The committees were composed of four military servicemen and one or two civilians. They were headed by French officers who, in breach of the guidelines of January 1919, often had limited or no knowledge of the Alsatian/German language and no legal training.⁹⁹ In some respect the civilians on the committees, commonly chosen from local notables, were supposed to compensate for this lack of local expertise. Yet they were often *revenants*, French Alsatians who had emigrated to interior France after 1871 and returned to Alsace after the war, whose image of the region differed significantly from how Alsatian society appeared 50 years after German annexation.¹⁰⁰ Like the identity cards, the committees were valid until June 1919 and disappeared by October 1919, when the Treaty of Versailles was ratified.¹⁰¹

The initial purpose of the triage committees was to conduct trials of suspicious ‘Alsatian’ individuals (as opposed to those classified as ‘Germans’). Civil servants and those who had worked for the German administrators were primary targets, but any Alsatian could get investigated based on allegations and rumours. Harvey emphasises that such trials were often used to continue private quarrels, often as ‘payback’ for denunciations of Francophile Alsatians during the war.¹⁰² The judgement of ‘Alsatians’ by these committees is discussed in detail by Harvey and Boswell. Both demonstrate how the post-war administration reconfigured French belonging both along ethnic lines and in connection with loyalty. However, this primary purpose of the *commissions de triage* was not their only function, and maybe not even the most cited. Despite originally being constructed as distinct institution for punishing Alsatians for collaboration with the German regime, the committees soon became associated with the identity card system. After the first distribution of cards, many Alsatians petitioned to have

⁹⁸ Harvey, 541–42.

⁹⁹ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 61; Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 541.

¹⁰⁰ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 323.

¹⁰¹ Uberfill, 203–6.

¹⁰² Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 538.

their status changed to A to avoid being treated as ‘second class’ citizen with considerably limited rights. While Carrol also notes an emerging black market for false identity cards,¹⁰³ many resorted to addressing the committees to change their status. Harvey highlights the contradiction between the practice of re-classifying Alsatians and official guidelines which ‘had specifically instructed [the committees’] members not to involve themselves in the issuance of identity cards, “a purely administrative operation.”’¹⁰⁴ Appeals to identity cards given were common, ‘at least 4,440 cases in which citizens contested their classification as Germans came before the commissions de triage in Strasbourg in 1919-20 alone, and many more such petitions never reached the commissions.’¹⁰⁵ Many of these petitions came from members of ‘mixed’ families: individuals who had received identity card B because one of their parents was not ‘of French origin.’ Considering the high proportion of intermarriages between Old German immigrants and local Alsatians, discussed previously, the administrative separation of many families became problematic for French administrators. It was later addressed in the Treaty of Versailles, which allowed spouses of French citizens to obtain French citizenship through naturalisation.¹⁰⁶ The identity card system, expulsions, and the sorting committees divided Alsatian society in categories according to degrees of ‘loyalty’ and ‘Frenchness’ or ‘disloyalty’ and ‘German influence.’ The many appeals of identity cards point to the divisive consequences of French citizenship policy and to the frustration of parts of the Alsatian population with the French regime.

¹⁰³ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 58.

¹⁰⁴ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 549.

¹⁰⁵ Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 154.

¹⁰⁶ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 232.

2.3 Nation, region, and gender in Alsace

Nationalisation and regional particularities

The local history of Alsace has received more attention than virtually any other French region.¹⁰⁷ Its historiography ranges from smaller studies to the almost compulsory chapter on Alsace-Lorraine in larger volumes on Franco-German relations or French and German nation-building. In this thesis, I especially build on the work of Laird Boswell, Alison Carrol, David Harvey, Elizabeth Vlossak, and Tara Zahra.¹⁰⁸ The repeatedly changing national affiliation of Alsace and subsequent nationalisation measures are central to this research, demonstrating the relevance of national and regional struggles in Alsace beyond its local history. Building on borderland studies which challenge narratives of centre and periphery, Carrol argues that ‘nations are formed (in part, at least) through cross-border interactions.’¹⁰⁹ The processes of conflict and negotiation of national belonging in Alsace following the First World War were integral to contemporary constructions of Frenchness rather than an exception from the national norm.

The reintegration of Alsace into France proved more difficult than French authorities had expected and exposed clashing understandings of Frenchness. The enthusiastic welcoming of French troops by Alsatian residents (fuelled by the experience of war and harsher policies of Germanisation) was at least partially based on genuine excitement among Francophile Alsatians.¹¹⁰ However the imposition of Frenchification measures caused discontent among Alsatian inhabitants, as it clashed with Alsatian practices such as the predominant use of German or a German dialect and confessional education.¹¹¹ According to Vlossak ‘the French

¹⁰⁷ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’; Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*; Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?; Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*; Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’.

¹⁰⁹ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 15.

¹¹⁰ Carrol, 51.

¹¹¹ Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 151.

patriotism preserved by some Alsatians was tested by the government's attempts to turn the region into a full and integral member of the French nation, at the expense of regional particularism.’¹¹² This is mirrored by Carrol’s findings that ‘Alsatians who had accepted or even celebrated the return to French rule became increasingly frustrated at the lack of space for regional particularities within the hegemonic notions of Frenchness that they encountered after 1918.’¹¹³ French nationalisation attempts reflected and further widened divisions within Alsatian society along national, class, and religious fault lines,¹¹⁴ but also led to rising support for Alsatian regionalism in the interwar period.¹¹⁵ However, these conflicts affected understandings of French and Alsatian belonging beyond the borderland. The national community was not imagined exclusively at the centre, but ‘both state and local society adopted the role of “motive force” in the formation and consolidation of the nation.’¹¹⁶ Carrol convincingly argues that encounters across the border to neighbouring states of Imperial Germany as well as with people from interior France created a sense of Alsatian distinctiveness, showing there was more than one conception of France.¹¹⁷ Expanding this idea, I will show that Alsatian re-negotiations of national belonging challenged the ideal of a uniform French nation and expose a plurality of French national communities.

Gendered representations

Gendered analyses of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Alsace generally focus on public discourse, especially nationalist propaganda. Discussing Alsace’s extraordinary symbolic role in French nationalist discourses, Boswell underscores ‘the profoundly gendered and subordinate place Alsace and Lorraine occupied in the French

¹¹² Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 293.

¹¹³ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 203.

¹¹⁴ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 157.

¹¹⁵ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 226.

¹¹⁶ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 8.

¹¹⁷ Carrol, 202.

imaginary’ when depicted as mourning sisters waiting to be returned to their mother. This gendered representation was linked to broader cultural stereotypes representing France as feminine and Germany or Prussia as masculine, especially sexualised narratives of the ‘sisters’ being at the mercy of the Germans.¹¹⁸ Vlossak highlights the wartime use of this image: ‘The popular description of Alsace and Lorraine as the “lost sisters,” coupled with the visually stunning image of an attractive young woman in the distinctive Alsatian *coiffe*, provided French propagandists throughout the war with an evocative and effective feminine allegory of Alsace, victimized by her cruel German assailants.’¹¹⁹ Depictions of Alsace-Lorraine as ‘sisters’ constructed the French nation as family and connected the annexed regions to the French ‘motherland,’ an analogy which was slightly adapted following the re-annexation in 1918. According to Boswell, ‘the twin sisters became increasingly referred to as children. This was not accidental: the twin sisters had resisted German rule largely on their own, and it was time to return to the nation’s control.’¹²⁰

During the First World War, French public discourse (ranging from newspapers to plays) ‘focused on the ways in which Alsatian women had not only waited for France, but had managed to keep the spirit of Frenchness alive in their homes.’¹²¹ French nationalist narratives thus promoted the image of Alsatian women as ‘protectors of their traditions, resisting Germanization and reproducing French culture.’ In contrast, ‘Alsatian men (...) were encouraged to commit acts that would traditionally have been regarded as unmasculine and cowardly, namely through desertion and the shirking of military responsibilities.’ Vlossak underscores that Alsatian women, rather than men, played the central role in French war propaganda.¹²² Vlossak’s work stands out as foregrounding both women’s local activities and

¹¹⁸ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 132.

¹¹⁹ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 191.

¹²⁰ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 137.

¹²¹ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 194.

¹²² Vlossak, 206.

symbolic roles in French and German nation-building projects. Her valuable gender analysis contrasts with androcentric accounts of nation-building and cross-national interactions in Alsace. For example, in his influential study of intermarriages in Strasbourg, Uberfill is significantly limited by his near-exclusive focus on men's intentions and actions, erasing women from the picture.

National categorisation and scholarly limitations

The processes of determining and contesting national belonging in Alsace are relevant beyond a local historiography of Alsace because they re-shaped conceptions of Frenchness. The entanglement of ethnic and civic elements of nationalism underlined in previous studies defies long-standing images of French nation-building. As Carrol rightly underscores, 'the perceived ambiguity that France encountered in Alsace led to new efforts to redefine the boundaries of the French nation (and notably to a greater focus upon race and ethnicity).'¹²³

In their studies of the identity card system of 1918-1919, Harvey, Boswell, and Zahra problematise the civic-ethnic dichotomy and point towards the incorporation of ethnic conceptions of nationhood in this context. Yet, even when deconstructing definitions of 'Alsatian' or 'French,' these studies struggle with at least partially perpetuating these national categories. Firstly, the dominant division of the population of Alsace into 'Alsations' and 'Germans' contradicts their legal status in the period from 1871 to 1918, when Alsations held German citizenship and many immigrants from other German states – and their descendants – had gained Alsatian state citizenship (for more detail, see Chapter 4). Secondly, as Zahra rightly underlines, 'in many cases it was far from clear who was a German and who was French or Alsatian, since intermarriage and bilingualism were widespread.'¹²⁴ Yet such nuances get easily lost in academic writing. Discussing the trials of the triage committees, Boswell for

¹²³ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 201.

¹²⁴ Zahra, 'The "Minority Problem" and National Classification', 151.

instance claims ‘the Germans, much like their Alsatian counterparts, faced a variety of accusations’¹²⁵ and argues that “‘pure blooded” Alsatians and Lorrainers (unlike Germans) could not be purged on racial grounds.’¹²⁶ While Boswell critiques the descent-based classification, putting ‘pure-blooded’ in inverted commas, he upholds a distinction between Alsatians and Germans which suggests that Alsatians could not be Germans and vice-versa. Harvey similarly notes ‘not only Germans, but also lifelong residents of Alsace could find themselves the victims of false accusations of pro-German sympathies,’¹²⁷ glossing over the fact that many so-called German immigrants were lifelong residents of Alsace.

This thesis does not fully escape the pitfall of reinforcing a division between Alsatians and Germans. For analytical purposes, I use an origin-based form of categorisation, distinguishing between Old Germans and French Alsatians. I use these categories to highlight the importance of intermarriage between the two groups, especially in the context of analysing individuals issued with an identity card B (i.e. children of one French Alsatian and one Old German parent). Furthermore, I examine why so-called Old Germans were singled out as ‘German elements’ by French administrators and why petitioners framed their non-immigrant side of their family as ‘French Alsatian.’ Even though I ultimately try to deconstruct the dichotomisation of Old German and French Alsatian, these categories still reflect contemporary nationalist narratives of ‘state officials and Francophile Alsatians [who] buttressed the myth of a loyally French Alsatian population by contrasting treasonous German “immigrants” with patriotic French-Alsatian “natives,” and promoting a fantasy of absolute separation between the two populations.’¹²⁸ Such awareness of this form of methodological nationalism is essential to try and counteract the naturalisation of uniform national categories.

¹²⁵ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 150.

¹²⁶ Boswell, 154.

¹²⁷ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 544.

¹²⁸ Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 152.

Building on the aforementioned studies, I analyse how the identity card system and subsequent appeals of initially assigned cards constructed coexisting, overlapping, and conflicting visions of national belonging to France. Combining a gender perspective and critical approaches to the Frenchification project in Alsace, I highlight how Alsatian women and men claimed their national belonging in highly gendered ways and how localised understandings of belonging in Alsace clashed with French administrative conceptions of Frenchness.

3. GENDERED HIERARCHIES AND NATIONAL BELONGING

National belonging does not emerge naturally. It is constructed and maintained by various actors – from the state to nationalist movements to individual community members – in hierarchical ways. In this thesis, I use *national belonging* as overarching term for layered and nested forms of belonging that ultimately relate to the nation(-state). National belonging can take the legalistic form of state membership, but simultaneously can extend to extra-legal ties within national and local communities. I propose that terms such as citizenship and nationality flatten our understanding of belonging into uniform categories, thus giving a false notion of equality. In contrast, I highlight that individuals related to the nation in gendered and context-specific ways. Definitions of who belonged to the national community and why were not static but changed over time and applied differently to women and men, those in central France and those in contested territories. Ultimately, constructions of national belonging in Alsace did not conform to neat categories (French or German, civic or ethnic, citizen or foreigner). Throughout this thesis I show that state administrators and local residents constructed multi-layered and diverging ideas of Frenchness and belonging to Alsace which reinforced gendered hierarchies.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss how nationality and citizenship scholarship has contributed to naturalising the nation-state and underline the importance of acknowledging the ambiguous and multiple meanings of nation. Further, I link the concept of national belonging to the construction of interlocking ties between the local and national community – nested belonging. In the second section, I analyse how a gendered perspective on the civic-ethnic dichotomy in nationalism scholarship provides insight when analysing how civic and ethnic conceptions of belonging were entangled in post-WW1 Alsace. In the third section, I focus on how patriarchal family hierarchies within the nation-state and the principle of family unity

impact gendered roles in and points of access to the national community, particularly highlighting marriage and derivative citizenship.

3.1 Pluralities of belonging

National belonging

Nationality is perhaps the most obvious category of national belonging. Depending on context, it can refer to national citizenship or more fluid and informal conceptions of national community and identity, constructed either by state authorities or by individual members of a community. Because of these different interpretations, I argue that nationality obscures interconnected yet distinct dimensions of belonging. Throughout this thesis, I therefore use *citizenship* to refer to a legalistic construction of belonging to a state with formally defined requirements and boundaries. Citizenship does not equate to nationality, yet the two terms are often used interchangeably in (Anglophone) citizenship literature¹²⁹ as well as public discourse.¹³⁰ Such synonymous use suggests a neat overlap of ‘nation’ and ‘state.’ This conflation is implicitly based on the dominance of modern nation-states, especially in Western European history. Melissa Feinberg’s study of post-1918 Czechoslovakia, for instance, demonstrates the challenges of differentiating between the two deeply intertwined concepts. Residents of the new nation-state could opt out of Czechoslovak citizenship when they did not consider themselves to be of Czech or Slovak nationality. The idea that nationality (or national identity) may serve as prerequisite for citizenship suggests they are distinct categories, even if they should overlap in the eyes of contemporary nationalists.¹³¹ I propose that considering citizenship and nationality as distinct concepts is necessary to critically address the

¹²⁹ For example Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*; Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship*; Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 215; Sainsbury, ‘Gender Differentiation and Citizenship Acquisition’; Cott’s use of ‘national citizenship’ stands out as more nuanced approach, see Cott, ‘Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934’, 1445–48.

¹³⁰ Herb critically underlines the common practice to use ‘nation’ and ‘state’ as synonyms, e.g. pointing to the UN Charter, ‘National Identity and Territory’, 12–13.

¹³¹ Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 74–75.

naturalisation of the nation-state. Such de-naturalisation is crucial in order to understand multi-national spaces that do not neatly fit into the framework of uniform nation-states. In order to more clearly differentiate between legalistic citizenship and non-legal, bottom-up conceptions of national identity, I avoid the term *nationality*.¹³²

Instead, I use the concept of *national belonging* to encompass both legalistic conceptions of nation-state membership and individualistic conceptions of being part of a national community. The question of national belonging shifts the focus of nationalism studies to ‘the human response to the concept of nationhood.’¹³³ This perspective overlaps with scholarship on national identity. *National identity* is firstly ‘bound up with the territory that helps define it’; secondly, it ‘is not an enduring constant but a set of cultural attributes bundled with articulated political objectives’; and thirdly it ‘exists as an identity distinct from the state.’¹³⁴ These three major characteristics correspond with my conception of non-legalistic national belonging. While I cite literature referring to national identity, I however refrain from labelling bottom-up constructions of national belonging by Alsatian residents as ‘identity’ due to their utilitarian purpose. Reflecting on Zahra’s claim that “‘identity’ itself matters so much in our current political and cultural landscape that it is challenging to imagine a time when it might not have mattered so much, or in the same ways,’ I suggest that Alsations may have strategically advanced a sense of subjective identification with the French nation in their appeals without necessarily identifying as French.¹³⁵

Nationalism relies on and reinforces two main conflicts: firstly, conflict between nations which institutionalises difference to others; secondly, conflict within the nation due to a divergence

¹³² In English and French, nationality (*nationalité*) has historically been used to signify citizenship, whereas German differentiates between the two concepts (*Staatsangehörigkeit* and *Nationalität*). I therefore also avoid ‘nationality’ to highlight linguistic and cultural differences.

¹³³ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 18.

¹³⁴ Kaplan, ‘Territorial Identities and Geographic Scale’, 31.

¹³⁵ Zahra, ‘Imagined Noncommunities’, 110.

from a projected homogenous national identity.¹³⁶ I argue that both conflicts rely on the construction of hierarchies of belonging – not only who belongs but also whose definition of belonging is ‘the right one.’ In the case of Alsace, this materialises in the conflict between France and Germany on the one hand, and in the divergence of Alsatians from ideal types of French- or Germanness on the other hand.

Understandings of ‘nation’ are not simply constructed and imposed by political leaders and then adopted by ‘ordinary people.’ As Benedict Anderson famously claims, ‘[the nation] is an imagined political community. (...) It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.’¹³⁷ Anderson focuses on the commonality of what people imagine. Individuals that do not know each other all imagine themselves as belonging to a French nation and thereby construct the community of France. Yet, this interpretation glosses over the plurality of nations imagined – not everyone imagines France identically. I foreground these divergences, arguing that individuals’ gender and locality influences the way they construct ‘their’ nation. If ‘to have a national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood,’¹³⁸ it is important that not everyone talked about nationhood the same way. This plurality is not merely a complication for scholars who might confuse different aspects or terms (such as citizenship, nationality, and ethnicity). In an insightful essay, Katherine Verdery underlines that because of the ambiguous meaning of nation, ‘people who use it differently can mobilize disparate audiences (both internal and international) who think that they understand the same thing by it.’¹³⁹ Two suggestions made by Verdery of how to approach ‘nation’ are particularly relevant for this thesis: firstly, to ‘explore which sense of

¹³⁶ Peterson, ‘Sexing Political Identities’, 35.

¹³⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

¹³⁸ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 8.

¹³⁹ Verdery, ‘Whither “Nation” and “Nationalism”?’’, 38.

nation is apt to the context in question' and secondly, to 'treat nation as a symbol and any given nationalism as having multiple meanings, offered as alternatives and competed over by different groups maneuvering to capture the symbol's definition and its legitimating effects.'¹⁴⁰ Following the First World War inhabitants of Alsace invoked different narratives and conceptions of national belonging in order to ultimately gain the same category – an identity card A and eventually French citizenship.

State membership

According to political scientist Diane Sainsbury, citizenship has been re-conceptualised in recent decades. No longer understood as narrow concept associated with nationality or legalism, dimensions such as membership and identities, obligations and participation, and status have received more attention.¹⁴¹ Legal historian Dieter Gosewinkel similarly suggests that recent scholarship has highlighted sociological aspects of citizenship, such as inclusion/exclusion and identities.¹⁴² Citizenship's central function, however, remains as the tie between state, individual, and community. For analytical purposes, I adopt Nancy Cott's description of citizenship as a 'purposefully constructed' institution that 'represents not only the bond between an individual and a state but also a bond between one individual and many others.' Citizenship is thus a form of social classification that confers identity and expresses belonging.¹⁴³

Two complementary yet distinct purposes of citizenship are highlighted by Frederick Cooper. Firstly, it defines inclusion 'in a formal sense of membership in a polity and a more subjective sense of belonging.' Secondly, it 'melds a person's rights and his or her obligations to a state (...)'¹⁴⁴ Mirroring this dual understanding of citizenship, Candice Lewis Bredbenner nicely

¹⁴⁰ Verdery, 39.

¹⁴¹ Sainsbury, 'Gender Differentiation and Citizenship Acquisition', 28.

¹⁴² Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen*, 17.

¹⁴³ Cott, 'Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934', 1440.

¹⁴⁴ Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 4.

distinguishes between a nationalistic spirit, which understands it as membership in a unique national community, and an individualistic paradigm, which defines citizenship by the rights it confers.¹⁴⁵ In this thesis, I focus on the former interpretation as membership. Yet I want to emphasise that belonging is intertwined with notions of rights and obligations and both sides are essential parts of citizenship.

Despite an idealised sense of equality among all citizens, systems of citizenship establish hierarchies not only between insiders and outsiders but also within the state community. These differences are addressed in imperial and postcolonial history, in which distinctions between citizens and subjects are central. Studying decolonial struggles in French Africa, Cooper highlights this categorisation in the French legal system, noting that both groups were considered to be French nationals. David Gorman describes citizenship as ‘republican notion’ which theoretically clashed with the status of subjects in the British legal structure.¹⁴⁶ Extending citizenship to colonial territories posed a challenge for European empires that simultaneously understood themselves as nation-states. On top of legal issues, it required them to (re-)define belonging – what were the boundaries of their community and what bound them together. In the French case, the distinction between citizens (mainly in Metropolitan France) and subjects (in the colonies) promoted a layered and hierarchical understanding of Frenchness. While all French nationals were bound together by their tie to France (or later the French Union), some were ‘more French’ than others.

Another axis of inequality is highlighted by gendered perspectives on citizenship and will be discussed in more detail in the last section of this chapter. Sainsbury underscores that feminist thought has challenged male-centric assumptions of citizenship. Discussing citizenship acquisition and reforms, she highlights the contributions of feminist historians in particular.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 11.

¹⁴⁶ Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship*, 9.

¹⁴⁷ Sainsbury, ‘Gender Differentiation and Citizenship Acquisition’, 28.

Her comparison of citizenship reforms in the United States, Germany, and France gives a useful overview. More detailed accounts of women's citizenship by Cott and Bredbenner are both centred around the US, whereas Elisa Camiscioli analyses the French interwar context.¹⁴⁸ Among scholars not focused on gender analysis, Gosewinkel stands out in including discussions of women's legal status and lack of independent citizenship throughout his monograph on German citizenship. In contrast to Gorman who – according to himself – addresses gender only in ‘tangential fashion,’ pointing to topics of marital expatriation and naturalisation in passing,¹⁴⁹ gender and women's historians have shown that women's unequal, and importantly *lower*, citizenship status is a central, non-negligible part of early twentieth-century citizenship and national belonging. Women's legal tie to the nation-state was different to men's. Without acknowledging this, any analyses of histories of citizenship and national belonging will remain androcentric and partial.

Scholars of legal, imperial, and gender history alike emphasise the links between citizenship, belonging, and identity. According to Gorman, ‘citizenship is a primary means through which societies assert, construct, and consecrate their sense of identity. It is about who belongs to the nation, who does not, and why.’¹⁵⁰ Cooper claims that ‘in practice citizens act as members of communities and participants in networks.’ He moreover recognises the plurality of differently sized communities: ‘The notion of “belonging” that is intrinsic to citizenship might crystallize around collectivities that are both smaller – based on ethnic affinity – or larger – notably the possibility of citizenship in an imperial or multinational political entity.’¹⁵¹ In defining boundaries of belonging, citizenship hence firstly confers a sense of identity to its members (in the case of post-WW1 Alsace: to be French, or German, or Alsatian – or a combination) and

¹⁴⁸ Cott, ‘Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934’; Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*; Camiscioli, ‘Intermarriage, Independent Nationality, and the Individual Rights of French Women’.

¹⁴⁹ Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship*, 20.

¹⁵⁰ Gorman, 1.

¹⁵¹ Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 5.

secondly constructs communities (to belong to others who are also French, German, or Alsatian).

Nested belonging

Early twentieth-century Alsace was a disputed territory, claimed not only by the French and the German states but as part of their respective ‘nations.’ Guntram H. Herb and David H. Kaplan emphasise the dependence of both state and national identity on territory.¹⁵² According to Herb, national identity is dependent on territory because ‘only territory provides tangible evidence of the nation’s existence and its historical roots.’¹⁵³ However, this link is challenged in borderland which disrupt the ideal of ‘a clearly bounded territory.’ As borderland at the periphery of both France and Germany, Alsace was an ‘ill-defined’ part of the respective nation. Herb underscores that ‘in these margins, the density declines and nations intermix with neighboring groups.’¹⁵⁴ Consequently, boundaries of both state and national identity formed at the political centre are more ambiguous in borderlands where they overlap and compete with diverse national and local boundaries.

Mary Louise Pratt introduces the term ‘contact zones (...)’ to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power.’¹⁵⁵ I propose to think about Alsace as such a contact zone of linguistic, cultural, and transnational encounters which created space for co-existing loyalties and ties of belonging. Far from a romanticised notion of peaceful coexistence, Alsace of 1918 and 1919 was also a zone of conflict and Othering. As Herb notes, extreme nationalists can be found in border areas or diaspora settlements because ‘there, the confrontation with other nations (...) is most intense.’¹⁵⁶ However, borderlands are not simply sites where two national communities

¹⁵² Herb, ‘National Identity and Territory’; Kaplan, ‘Territorial Identities and Geographic Scale’.

¹⁵³ Herb, ‘National Identity and Territory’, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Herb, 19.

¹⁵⁵ Pratt, ‘Arts of the Contact Zone’, 34.

¹⁵⁶ Herb, ‘National Identity and Territory’, 20.

clash. Kaplan outlines at least three distinct spatial identities in a borderland. ‘There is the identity based on the state controlling the area, there is the identity based on the nation within which the occupants most identify, and there is a third borderland identity that is generated from the occupance and symbolism of the borderland itself.’ For instance, ‘the Alsatians (...) position themselves as variously French, German, and somehow apart from either.’¹⁵⁷

Building on Kaplan’s claim that ‘our identities are arranged in zones of increasing geographic extent,’¹⁵⁸ I argue that belonging in Alsace was not a matter of a single, uniform category – either French or German. On top of being layered hierarchically along the lines of gender, descent, and commitment to the nation-state, belonging in Alsace was also layered according to interlocking, nested identities. I use the concept of *nested belonging* to refer to overlapping ties to different communities (for example someone’s household, neighbourhood, region, and nation). While Kaplan frames national identity as ‘situated within a hierarchy of geographically based identities that coexist and sometimes compete with it,’¹⁵⁹ Knight stresses that ‘local and regional attachments can reinforce and do not necessarily compete with a national identity that is derived from an attachment to the nation.’¹⁶⁰ Drawing on both these approaches, I argue that because of suspicions regarding national allegiance (i.e. competing loyalties to France and Germany), Alsatians drew on nested belonging in interlocking communities – they were French not despite but *because* they were Alsatian.

Because of their distance from the centre of the nation-state and exposure to influences from neighbouring states and within the border region itself, distinct borderland identities can provoke anxiety for and increased efforts to secure the border by the state authorities.¹⁶¹ Kaplan argues that ‘the allegiance of borderland peoples is pulled in several directions – toward the

¹⁵⁷ Kaplan, ‘Territorial Identities and Geographic Scale’, 37.

¹⁵⁸ Kaplan, 31.

¹⁵⁹ Kaplan, 31.

¹⁶⁰ Knight, ‘Afterword: Nested Identities’, 318.

¹⁶¹ Kaplan, ‘Territorial Identities and Geographic Scale’, 37.

larger state, the larger nation, and into their own smaller-scale affiliation.’¹⁶² I propose that even though nested belonging is not limited to borderlands, it becomes more visible there because of clashes with the centre. Firstly, borderland communities diverge from central ideals of ‘the nation.’ Secondly, they cause concerns about potentially competing loyalties and allegiances. In post-war Alsace, when loyalty and belonging were highly contested, nested belonging became both a method of justifying one’s ties to France and cause to suspect one’s Frenchness.

3.2 Deconstructing the civic-ethnic dichotomy

Civic France and ethnic Germany

The civic-ethnic dichotomy is the most common binary conceptualisation of nationalisms, linked to other binaries of ‘West-East’ and ‘good-bad.’ Commonly linked to Hans Kohn’s work of the 1940s and 1960s, variations of the dichotomy go back to the late nineteenth century.¹⁶³ In short, scholars distinguish between ‘civic nations’ based on political choice and territory and ‘ethnic nations’ based on ancestry and shared culture. While the former type is commonly presented as non-discriminatory, the latter is supposedly more exclusive and authoritarian. Marko Hajdinjak aptly summarises the dominant understanding of civic nations as ‘community of free, independent-minded *individuals*’ contrasted with ethnic nations as ‘uniform block of *people*.’¹⁶⁴

Attempts to apply this dichotomy to real nation-states, fitting them into two neat categories, have proven futile. Dichotomous categorisations oversimplify nationality and erase overlapping or contradictory conceptions of belonging and loyalty.¹⁶⁵ John Coakley suggests the components of the dichotomy should be ‘seen as ideal types (which need not exist in reality)

¹⁶² Kaplan, 45.

¹⁶³ Coakley, ‘National Identity and the “Kohn Dichotomy”’, 253–55.

¹⁶⁴ Hajdinjak, ‘Tolerantly Ethnic and Aggressively Civic?’, 251.

¹⁶⁵ Coakley, ‘National Identity and the “Kohn Dichotomy”’, 258.

rather than as discrete categories (which are pointless unless they are populated).'¹⁶⁶ In this thesis, I adopt Coakley's proposal that the ideal types of civic and ethnic nationalism 'may coexist, in varying degrees, within the same nationalist movement'¹⁶⁷ and apply it to the diverse conceptions of national belonging within French administrative regulations and Alsatians' appeal letters to the civil-military administration.

The two types of nationhood have been linked to historical nation-building processes. Kohn for instance suggests that Western nationalisms were 'a project of the state, aimed at disseminating a sense of nationality that was essentially political,' whereas Eastern nationalisms were 'a protest against existing state forms, expressed initially largely in cultural terms.'¹⁶⁸ Ethnic nationalism was hence associated with efforts to form nation-states, civic nationalism with established nation-states. France and Germany have served as prototypes for scholarly constructions of this dichotomy, both in nationalism and in citizenship discourse. In his oft-cited study comparing French and German understandings of nationhood, Rogers Brubaker confidently claims 'if the French understanding of nationhood has been state-centered and assimilationist, the German understanding has been *Volk*-centered and differentialist.'¹⁶⁹ He moreover explicitly links the concepts of nationhood and citizenship, arguing that distinctive understandings of nationhood in France and Germany 'are embodied and expressed in sharply differing definitions of citizenship' – namely the territorial and the descent principle (*ius soli* and *ius sanguinis*).¹⁷⁰

Differences between French and German conceptions of national belonging are in part explained by historical circumstances. In contrast to the well-established French state,

¹⁶⁶ Coakley, 253; Hajdinjak similarly criticises the tendency to fit real states into ideal types of the dichotomy, Hajdinjak, 'Tolerantly Ethnic and Aggressively Civic?', 249.

¹⁶⁷ Coakley, 'National Identity and the "Kohn Dichotomy"', 267.

¹⁶⁸ Coakley, 253.

¹⁶⁹ Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 1, 3.

¹⁷⁰ Brubaker, 14.

nineteenth-century Germany as an ethno-cultural community lacked a common state, or to cite Brubaker: ‘In Germany nationhood was an ethnocultural fact; in France it was a political fact.’¹⁷¹ In nineteenth-century French historical writing, ideas of self-determination became increasingly important, competing with the previous framework of natural frontiers. Referring in particular to debates around Alsace’s nationality in 1870, Peter Sahlins argues ‘natural boundaries were not considered a meaningful framework of national identity unless they could be linked to a voluntary identification with the French nation.’¹⁷² This emphasis on voluntary identification excluded colonial territories, as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4. While voluntarist arguments regarding Alsace made by French intellectuals around 1870 serve as prime examples for French civic nationalism, the impact of the annexation on such voluntarist conceptions is rarely addressed theoretically. Brubaker claims that in France ‘it was much more difficult to distinguish nation and state, and therefore to imagine a specifically ethnocultural nation’ because the nation-state was a political fact.¹⁷³ He contrasts this with German tensions in the eastern borderlands, which he highlights as central to German ethnocultural conceptions.¹⁷⁴ Yet, the established nation-state status of France was challenged following the German annexation of Alsace in 1871. France still considered Alsace, now under German rule, to be French even though it was not part of the French state.¹⁷⁵ In contrast to narratives stylising Alsace as foundational to a voluntarist understanding of Frenchness, Brubaker’s argument, when applied to post-1871 Alsace, raises the question whether French conceptions of national belonging (at least in regard to Alsace) in fact became more ethnic because the region became contested. His line of argument hence has fundamentally different consequences in the contested borderland than in ‘established’ France. I therefore argue that even nuanced

¹⁷¹ Brubaker, 4.

¹⁷² Sahlins, ‘Natural Frontiers Revisited’, 1448.

¹⁷³ Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 4.

¹⁷⁴ Brubaker, 11.

¹⁷⁵ Sahlins points to a return of the natural frontier paradigm after 1871 and even more so after the ‘recovery’ of Alsace in 1918, ‘Natural Frontiers Revisited’, 1449–50.

dichotomies draw on generalisations and are constructed with focus on the centre or the majority and may be inadequate to explain processes in zones of contestation such as the Alsatian borderland.

Assimilation and minority rights

Historically the civic-ethnic dichotomy has carried strong normative connotations, as (Western) scholars presented ‘ethnic’ nationalism as backward in contrast to a superior, more tolerant ‘Western’ nationalism. It is thus rightly criticised as a self-congratulatory, biased position.¹⁷⁶ Criticising the tendency to differentiate between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ nationalisms and the subsequent association of the latter with ‘the periphery,’ Michael Billig observes that ‘those in established nations – at the centre of things – are led to see nationalism as the property of others, not of “us.”’¹⁷⁷ Consequently, “nationalism” becomes identified as a problem: it occurs “there” on the periphery, not “here” at the centre.’¹⁷⁸

Following the First World War, notions of Western civic superiority were linked to attitudes towards minority rights. In a comparative study of the French and Czechoslovak borderlands, Zahra shows that ‘emerging minority rights protections (and the lack thereof) in Europe after 1918 coalesced through imagined oppositions between a fragmented, multi-ethnic east and a homogenous and democratic west.’¹⁷⁹ The refusal of France to incorporate any minorities treaties (which they had imposed on newly formed nation-states in central and eastern Europe) in their own regulations was based on the claim France had no minorities. The notion of France as uniform national group has been reinforced in scholarly literature by claims that neither France did not contain ‘significant opposition groups.’¹⁸⁰ This narrative glosses over a more heterogenous composition of the French population. Discussing common intermarriages

¹⁷⁶ Coakley, ‘National Identity and the “Kohn Dichotomy”’, 257.

¹⁷⁷ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 5.

¹⁷⁸ Billig, 6.

¹⁷⁹ Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 146.

¹⁸⁰ Herb, ‘National Identity and Territory’, 11.

between foreigners and French citizens, Camiscioli frames early twentieth-century France as country of immigration to be contrasted with more homogenous nation-states.¹⁸¹ Zahra very strongly contests the French (self-)image as homogenous and tolerant, pointing towards the treatment of the predominantly German-speaking population of Alsace after the First World War.¹⁸²

In relation to ethnic minority rights, Coakley underlines that Western states are reluctant to recognise the existence of sub-state groups, seen for example in fewer censuses that record ethnic or linguistic affiliation. He moreover highlights the different connotations of ‘ethnic’ and ‘national’ in different linguistic contexts. Whereas the English ‘nationality’ is used to convey the same meaning as ‘citizenship,’ referring both to political-legal and to ethnic affiliations, other languages (he notably points to German, spoken in regions associated with ethnic nationalism) distinguish between political and ethnic affiliation.¹⁸³ In Western European states, the term ‘ethnic’ typically refers to immigrants from the colonies rather than recognised sub-state groups.¹⁸⁴ He convincingly argues that the refusal to acknowledge cultural differences in Western states actually constitutes a covert form of ethnic nationalism rather than Western superiority.¹⁸⁵ It seems that regions where ethnic nationalism is meant to be dominant more clearly distinguish between citizenship and nationality, as opposed to civic – or in other words, assimilationist – regions. The linguistic distinctions between political and ethnic belonging (or lack thereof) demonstrate the need to more clearly articulate in Anglophone scholarship what ‘citizenship’ and ‘nationality’ mean.

¹⁸¹ Camiscioli, ‘Intermarriage, Independent Nationality, and the Individual Rights of French Women’, 53.

¹⁸² Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 137–38.

¹⁸³ He points to the German distinctions between ‘Volkszugehörigkeit’ and ‘Staatszugehörigkeit,’ see Coakley, ‘National Identity and the “Kohn Dichotomy”’, 259.

¹⁸⁴ Coakley, 261.

¹⁸⁵ Coakley, 267.

Drawing attention to the lack of minority rights, Hajdinjak proposes a useful framework to re-define the ‘civic-as-good’ and ‘ethnic-as-bad’ dichotomy: ‘the main criterion [for classification] should be the willingness of the dominant national group to recognise minorities as having an equal and inalienable right to live in their common homeland *without* trying to assimilate them culturally, religiously, or linguistically.’¹⁸⁶ He underlines the power of the majority in ‘civic’ nations to decide upon criteria of inclusion and compellingly argues that calling civic nationalism tolerant is hypocritical because ‘it is easy to be civic when you are the one who is calling all the shots.’¹⁸⁷ Kaplan similarly underlines ‘nations in control of the state apparatus (...) can often perceive the two identities [nation and state] as one and the same, but these nations enjoy the luxury of control.’¹⁸⁸ The association of civic nationalism with established nation-states hence relies on the power of these nation-states to enforce their vision of nationhood. I propose that the shift towards an ethnic conceptualisation of Alsace highlights the limits of majoritarian, assimilationist models of national belonging. To paraphrase Hajdinjak, in 1918, France was no longer the (only) one ‘calling the shots’ in Alsace.¹⁸⁹

Civic men and ethnic women

The civic-ethnic binary has repeatedly been refuted by scholars working on Alsace.¹⁹⁰ However, gendered analyses of the civic and ethnic elements of nation-building remain sparse. Jill Vickers and Athanasia Vouloukos point out that ‘gender literature has not theorized differences in impact on women of civic versus ethnic nations, the dichotomy which organizes much mainstream literature and popular discourse.’¹⁹¹ In an insightful study of Greek nation-building processes they propose to ‘build a conceptual bridge between feminist and mainstream

¹⁸⁶ Hajdinjak, ‘Tolerantly Ethnic and Aggressively Civic?’, 257.

¹⁸⁷ Hajdinjak, 248.

¹⁸⁸ Kaplan, ‘Territorial Identities and Geographic Scale’, 34.

¹⁸⁹ Hajdinjak, ‘Tolerantly Ethnic and Aggressively Civic?’, 248.

¹⁹⁰ See for example Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 144; Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 3; Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 7.

¹⁹¹ Vickers and Vouloukos, ‘Changing Gender/Nation Relations’, 508.

theorizing about nations and nationalism’ by linking analyses of gender/nation dynamics to the civic-ethnic dichotomy.¹⁹²

A gender analysis of civic and ethnic nation-building projects expands our knowledge on how the gendered roles assigned to members of the national community have been constructed historically. It contests the view that civic nationalism was more tolerant and inclusionary than ethnic models. Vickers and Vouloukos argue that civic nation-making was a state-led process based on citizenship. However, until the twentieth century ‘only autonomous men were citizens: women and dependent men were excluded because under the *liberal civic* model, citizens had to be economically and politically independent.’¹⁹³ Civic nationalism hence assigned independent male citizens a privileged role in their national community. Adding to critical accounts of civic tolerance discussed in the previous section, they note that ‘civic nation-states often assimilated minority nations, ethnic and religious groups, so inclusion in the civic culture *was* often coerced.’¹⁹⁴ In contrast to androcentric civic approaches that constructed women as passive citizens, ethnic nation-making projects relied on women as agents of inclusion and ethnic closure, especially in their roles as mothers and cultural reproducers.¹⁹⁵ Vickers and Vouloukos conclude that ‘from a gender perspective (...) civic nation-making in Greece initially was more exclusionary than the moderate ethnic type.’¹⁹⁶

Building on the assumption that elements of civic and ethnic ideal types may coexist and further developing Vickers’ and Vouloukos’ gender analysis, I am proposing that civic roles in the national community (independent citizenship) were coded as masculine at the same time as ethnic responsibility (biological and cultural reproducers) was feminised. The appeal processes

¹⁹² Vickers and Vouloukos, 503.

¹⁹³ Vickers and Vouloukos, 509.

¹⁹⁴ Vickers and Vouloukos, 509.

¹⁹⁵ Vickers and Vouloukos, 513, 520.

¹⁹⁶ Vickers and Vouloukos, 512.

following the distribution of identity cards in 1919 Alsace expose this entanglement of gendered civic and ethnic elements of nationalism.

3.3 Gender differences and family structures

Gendered ties to the nation

Feminist scholarship has demonstrated the many ways in which nationalism and nation-states are deeply gendered. By codifying gendered roles within the nation-state, women and men are made unequal community members – even if they nominally received the same label or category of belonging. Gendered roles affect experiences within the nation and shape women’s and men’s access to the national community.

Joane Nagel underscores men’s dominance in the nation-state led by masculinist institutions and processes.¹⁹⁷ Military service shapes men’s tie to the nation-state in a way inaccessible to women. While wartime propaganda draws heavily on men’s duty to protect their nation (and ‘their’ women), national defence is not the only function of military service. Ayşe Gül Altınay persuasively argues that ‘military service inevitably defines male citizenship and masculinity in an opposition to female citizenship and femininity’¹⁹⁸ and hence creates a ‘two-tiered citizenship.’¹⁹⁹ V. Spike Peterson and Nagel both emphasise the role of militarisation in gendering nationalism, pointing to notions of honour, patriotism, and duty associated with masculinity.²⁰⁰ Simultaneously, militarisation reinforces standards of hegemonic masculinity that are not desirable for all men. Military service is commonly associated with the civic duties of citizens/ members of the national community. In the following chapters, I will analyse its role in defining national membership: firstly, how German and French citizenship regulations allowed for naturalisation and expatriation of men due to military service; secondly, how

¹⁹⁷ Nagel, ‘Masculinity and Nationalism’, 243–44.

¹⁹⁸ Altınay, *The Myth of the Military Nation*, 33.

¹⁹⁹ Altınay, 77.

²⁰⁰ Nagel, ‘Masculinity and Nationalism’, 252; Peterson, ‘Sexing Political Identities’, 43.

female and male Alsatian individuals claimed their tie to the French nation by highlighting their relatives' service in the French military.

Women are expected to prove their loyalty to the nation differently to men, in ways commonly described as more passive, symbolic, or indirect. Anne McClintock claims that 'women are typically construed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency.'²⁰¹ Their role in the nation – and in the idealised family unit within the state – is that of heterosexual, biological and social reproducers of group members. In short, to give birth to (the right) children and to raise them in culturally appropriate ways.²⁰² Moreover, women are constructed as symbolic markers of the nation. Peterson concludes, 'the motherland is female but the state and its citizen-warriors are male and must prove (its) their political manhood through conflict.'²⁰³ However interpretations of the role of mothers and wives as merely passive problematically reinforce gender stereotypes. In the following chapters, I demonstrate that being a mother and wife was invoked as an influential factor in determining belonging in Alsace.

The nation-state as family

The nation-state is structured by and further maintains a patriarchal family hierarchy. The nation and the state are imagined as family – precisely, as heteronormative and patriarchal family. According to McClintock, social hierarchy within nation-states and empires depends on the prior naturalisation of the social subordination of women and children within the family. Peripheries and colonies are represented as children, while real women and children are subordinated to adult men within the 'national family.'²⁰⁴ Such hierarchical family analogies

²⁰¹ McClintock, 'Family Feuds', 62.

²⁰² Peterson, 'Sexing Political Identities', 44–47.

²⁰³ Peterson, 49.

²⁰⁴ McClintock, 'Family Feuds', 63–64.

also shaped French nationalist discourse regarding Alsace-Lorraine, depicting the two provinces as ‘twin sisters’ and ‘lost children’ separated from the French ‘motherland.’

The central role of family is not only a defining aspect of nationalism but also of the state. Citizenship is primarily a family-based category. Peterson stresses that states ‘presume or desire intergenerational continuity’ and ‘base membership on familial inheritance’ which ‘renders “family” a focal site of power relations.’²⁰⁵ In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German citizenship law, ‘the family represented a central institution for the transfer of citizenship. Both marriage and the marital birth of a child established citizenship which originated from that of the husband and father.’²⁰⁶ In France, the *Code Civil* was ‘based around a typically bourgeois conception of the family, where the male head of household was the family’s sole legal person and citizen.’²⁰⁷ Citizenship law hence secured men’s dominant position within both the family and society. Firstly, the doctrine of ‘family unity’ in legal thought suggested that the family’s internal harmony depended on all members being citizens of the same state. Secondly, the patriarchal notion of the man as ‘head of the household’ meant that this family citizenship was determined by the husband and father.²⁰⁸

Family, in these theories, is firmly based on the institution of heterosexual marriage. A family was constituted by a married heterosexual couple and their legitimate children. Cott claims that ‘the institution of marriage has (...) been the vehicle for the state’s part in forming and sustaining the gender order – or, it might be said, in forming and sustaining gender itself.’²⁰⁹ Caroline Arni describes marriage as ‘vital element of political order’ which determines ‘gender differences in a highly codified normative form.’²¹⁰ Peterson similarly points to the ‘regulatory

²⁰⁵ Peterson, ‘Family Matters in Racial Logics’, 179.

²⁰⁶ Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen*, 294.

²⁰⁷ Daskalova and Zimmermann, ‘Women’s and Gender History’, 291.

²⁰⁸ Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 74.

²⁰⁹ Cott, ‘Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934’, 1442.

²¹⁰ Arni, *Entzweiungen*, 6–7.

mechanism' of marriage in modern states.²¹¹ Marriage is thus both an individual experience of married couples and a normative, structuring institution. By adopting the heteronormative and patriarchal structures of marriage, citizenship regulations reinforce these structures and further sustain the gender order. In Chapter 4, I will discuss in more detail how in both German and French citizenship regulations women were assigned the same citizenship as their husbands upon marriage and legitimate children were given the citizenship of their fathers (which rarely differed from their legitimate mothers given the first rule). In Chapters 5 and 6, I will foreground how *intermarriage* in Alsace disrupted dominant practices of determining national belonging. By transgressing constructed national boundaries (between long-established French Alsatian inhabitants and Old German immigrants), intermarried couples in Alsace posed a challenge to Frenchification measures which intended to remove German influences from the region. Consequently, I argue that the principle of family unity was contested by concerns of ethnic purity and French national unity.

Family unity, dependency, and loyalty

Citizenship reproduces a multitude of hierarchies within the national community, reinforcing racist, classist, and sexist power (among others) dynamics. In this thesis I focus on the gendered hierarchy sustained through women's passive as well as derivative citizenship in early twentieth-century France and Germany. Firstly, women did not have full civic rights (most notably the right to vote) which are in theory attached to citizenship.²¹² Secondly, women's citizenship status was tied to her father or husband, and for instance changed when marrying a foreign citizen.

²¹¹ Peterson, 'Family Matters in Racial Logics', 190.

²¹² In practice, not only women but also lower class and property-less men were commonly excluded from franchise.

Gender, race, and decolonial scholars distinguish between active and passive citizenship. Passive citizens hold citizenship but lack participatory rights (most prominently political franchise). In German law, for example, ‘throughout the entire nineteenth century, women did not count as citizens in the political sense. Whether married or single: they had no legal capacity as citizens of the state.’²¹³ Restrictions on civic rights were not limited to women. Writing about the United States, Cott differentiates between being an American *national* (which could include white women, white men without property, children, and African Americans) and being an American *citizen* (property-owning white men), with only the final group having participatory rights.²¹⁴ Cooper similarly outlines the practice of distinguishing between *nationals* and *citizens* in the French imperial citizenship system.²¹⁵ This distinction affects legal constructions of national belonging in 1918-1919 Alsace in two ways: firstly, women were excluded from active citizenship by French law; secondly, the identity card system implemented by the French administrators in the transitional period of re-integration restricted the participatory rights of anyone without an identity card A.

Women’s national belonging was moreover fundamentally shaped by their lack of independent citizenship. According to French and German legal regulations following the First World War, women lost their native citizenship when marrying a foreign citizen and adopted their husband’s citizenship. Sainsbury calls this ‘derivative nationality’ and explains, ‘historically, citizenship has been a patriarchal institution that prescribed the indivisible nationality of the family, enshrining pater familias and marriage as its cornerstones. The husband’s nationality determined that of his wife and the father’s nationality that of the children.’²¹⁶ As previously argued, women’s derivative citizenship links back to the principle of family unity. Bredbenner

²¹³ Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen*, 295.

²¹⁴ Cott, ‘Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934’, 1448.

²¹⁵ Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 16.

²¹⁶ Sainsbury, ‘Gender Differentiation and Citizenship Acquisition’, 28.

further highlights the struggle for women's independent citizenship in the US, outlining how women's rights organisations not only fought for franchise but also for the abolition of marital expatriation and naturalisation.²¹⁷ Marital expatriation could leave women stateless, if their husband's state did not provide marital naturalisation.²¹⁸ Moreover, widowed and divorced women found themselves in a legally precarious situation, having to reapply for naturalisation instead of being repatriated.²¹⁹ Consequently women who lost their citizenship upon marriage lost rights that had previously been their birth rights. Gosewinkel outlines that formerly German citizens lost their claim to social services and protection from expulsion.²²⁰ Feinberg highlights economic disadvantages (such as prohibition from practicing certain professions, ineligibility for employment in the civil service, and ineligibility for social services) for expatriated women in Czechoslovakia.²²¹ Women's legal dependency on their husbands became especially problematic in 1918 Europe. As borders were changed, residents' citizenship status and national classifications changed too, leaving married women in (what were now considered to be) intermarriages especially vulnerable. Regulations regarding derivative citizenship were temporarily challenged during the interim period in post-war Alsace. In Chapter 4, I will outline how Alsatian married couples could be assigned differing identity cards, due to descent-based classification. I will further highlight how the insecurity and instability created by repeatedly changing rules regarding national belonging and specifically citizenship particularly affected married women.

In France, supporters of derivative citizenship emphasised religious and secular understandings of marriage based on the notion 'that any division within the home could undermine its proper

²¹⁷ Marital naturalisation and expatriation refer to the legal practice of gaining or losing citizenship through marriage, Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 3.

²¹⁸ Feinberg highlights France as one among few countries that had liberalised their citizenship law to allow some women to retain their citizenship after marrying a foreigner to avoid statelessness, *Elusive Equality*, 81.

²¹⁹ see Feinberg, 80.

²²⁰ Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen*, 297.

²²¹ Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 78.

functioning’ or voiced concerns regarding juridical chaos if more than one body of marriage law would be applicable.²²² Camiscioli provides a valuable connection between derivative citizenship, family, and state structures, arguing that ‘the “individual interests” of the woman were (...) subordinated to the interests of the family, and by extension, the state, as a unified family was the crucial foundation of a stable and prominent nation.’²²³ Family unity was hence inextricably tied to married women’s supposed subordination to their husband. Based on a patriarchal understanding of marriage, women were expected to obey their husbands which made them personally dependent on them. This in turn meant they were considered unable to enact political rights.²²⁴ In contrast, ‘having and supporting dependents was evidence of independence,’ Cott explains. Marriage and property thus empowered men’s civic status whereas marriage disempowered women’s civic status.²²⁵ Consequently, married women’s status of dependency was reinforced by citizenship regulations, but simultaneously it was used to justify their unequal relation to the nation-state. In Chapter 5 and 6, I will explore how Alsatian residents invoked the principle of family unity and married women’s dependency to support their demand for a more advantageous identity card: practices of marital naturalisation were thus turned around, yet the narrative of the nation-state as family and gendered hierarchies remained.

Women’s subordination to men within marriage was not only framed as obedience but also as a hierarchical form of *loyalty*. The patriarchal conception of personal loyalty to the male head of the family (father or husband) was transferred to loyalty to the nation. Bredbenner persuasively argues that derivative citizenship was based ‘on the premise that a woman’s

²²² Camiscioli, ‘Intermarriage, Independent Nationality, and the Individual Rights of French Women’, 55.

²²³ Camiscioli, 55.

²²⁴ Cott, ‘Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934’, 1451–52; in France, married women were legally incapacitated until 1938, even though derivative citizenship there was abolished in 1927, see Camiscioli, ‘Intermarriage, Independent Nationality, and the Individual Rights of French Women’, 56.

²²⁵ Cott, ‘Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934’, 1451–52.

personal loyalties fully and exclusively informed her political allegiances.²²⁶ Marrying a foreign citizen was hence not only a private but also a political act. Whereas it was men's duty to prove their loyalty to the nation-state through military-service, as discussed above, women were loyal to the nation-state by showing loyalty to their family. However, I will propose in Chapter 5 and 6 that these gendered forms of loyalty were entangled in post-war Alsace, when inhabitants of the region appealed their original identity card by highlighting their ties to the local and national community.

²²⁶ Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 12–13.

4. CITIZENSHIP AND LEGAL FRAMINGS OF BELONGING

Citizenship serves as the legal tie between the individual and the state and therefore expresses belonging not only to an abstract state but also to a community of state members or citizens. The legalistic conception of belonging to a state (as well as to other state members) has formally defined requirements which constitute the boundaries of the (nation-)state community. Legal categories of national belonging deeply affect individuals' rights and status within the state. However, they also shape how individuals think about belonging and can in turn be influenced by individuals' reactions. The transitional identity cards issued to Alsatian residents in 1918 and 1919 constituted alternative legalistic categories. Due to their volatile, temporary nature, identity cards were potentially more open to change. In practice, immediate protests and appeals thus resulted in adaptations of the categories.

Formal criteria for national belonging in Alsace were determined firstly by German and French legal regulations valid in 1918-1919 and secondly by regulations specifically for post-war Alsace. In the first section, I foreground the boundary-focused German and French terms for citizenship to investigate the meaning of national belonging. This contrasts with the dual function of the English term which includes both state membership and the civic duties and rights attached to that membership. In the second section, I examine how German and French approaches to citizenship were centred around notions of 'family' (through birth and marriage) and thereby enforced gendered roles and hierarchies. Furthermore, pointing to the link between citizenship and loyalty, the role of marriage and military service as gendered practices of proving (national) allegiance will be analysed. In the third section, I highlight how the identity cards in post-war Alsace imposed a descent-based system of layered, hierarchical belonging. These special regulations underscored the special status of Alsace as outside of France and Germany proper and temporarily challenged the dominant patrilineal system by giving preference to ethnic purity.

4.1 Translating citizenship

Belonging to the (nation-)state

Legal categories of belonging in Alsace were constructed by two competing nation-states: France and Germany. While Alsatians were subject to German law until the end of the First World War, in late 1918 regulations were enacted by the French administrators to integrate the region into France and the French legal system. National belonging was hence re-configured multiple times, changing from German citizenship law to French interim regulations to French citizenship law.

Prior to the re-annexation of Alsace by the French state, region was subject to the citizenship law of the German Empire, which was reformed shortly before the outbreak of the war through the *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* of 22 July 1913.²²⁷ Despite being an imperial territory with limited rights compared to ‘proper’ German states, the citizenship law of 1913 considered Alsace-Lorraine a federal state when defining ‘state citizenship’ (*Staatsangehörigkeit*) within the German Empire. By the time of the re-annexation of Alsace, French citizenship regulations comprised various laws from the enforcement of the *Code Civil* in 1804 to the law of 3 July 1917. These legal provisions were compiled in a *Résumé Pratique*, a handbook on the acquisition and loss of French citizenship published in August 1919 (5th revised edition) by Gaston Arexy, head of the *Sûreté Départementale à Constantine*. While the primary purpose of this compilation was to help French officials distribute identity cards to foreigners in Colonial Algeria, the 1919 edition included a special section on Alsace-Lorraine.²²⁸

²²⁷ Printed in the law gazette *Reichs-Gesetzblatt*, 1913, no. 46, see ADBR 27 AL 318; several reform proposals had been drafted in response to the French citizenship law of 1889, an indication for contemporary comparative perspectives on citizenship law of 1889, an indication for contemporary comparative perspectives on citizenship, see Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen*, 287.

²²⁸ I found a copy of the handbook among the files of the *Commissariat General de la République, 1918-1925* in the *Archives départementales du Bas-Rhin* in Strasbourg, which suggests it was available to French authorities in post-war Alsace.

The tie between individual and nation and/or state is established in the first sections of the French and German legal regulations. In the French version, citizenship (*nationalité*) is defined as ‘the tie that connects an individual to a constituted state,’ highlighting the link between nation-state and individual as primary function of citizenship.²²⁹ Further on, French citizenship is repeatedly described as ‘quality.’²³⁰ The first section of the German law proclaims ‘German is, who possesses the citizenship in a federal state [*Staatsangehörigkeit*] (...) or the immediate citizenship of the Empire [*Reichsangehörigkeit*].’²³¹ German citizenship was therefore derived from membership in a German state.²³²

In the early twentieth-century French Republic and German Empire, citizenship signified the tie to an established or emerging *nation*-state. The dominance of national citizenship however manifests to different degrees in French and German legal regulations. These nuances easily get lost in translation when applying the Anglophone term *citizenship* to both linguistic contexts. The different linguistic concepts of citizenship reflect structural differences between a centralist, assimilationist French citizenship and a federal, not yet unified plurality of German citizenships, which affected the treatment of Alsace.

Limitations of ‘citizenship’

The French *nationalité* and the German *Staatsangehörigkeit* both signify *citizenship*, yet they do not entirely overlap. The French term can be literally translated as *nationality* and suggests an equation of nation and state. German law however did not use the equivalent term *Nationalität* but described citizenship as ‘state membership.’ This nuance goes beyond mere

²²⁹ ‘La *nationalité* est le lien qui rattache un individu à un État constitué,’ *Résumé Pratique*, part I, section 1, ADBR 121 AL 590.

²³⁰ See for example *Résumé Pratique*, title page, part I, section 2, part I, section 4, ADBR 121 AL 590.

²³¹ ‘Deutscher ist, wer die Staatsangehörigkeit in einem Bundesstaat (...) oder die unmittelbare Reichsangehörigkeit (...) besitzt,’ *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* (1913), section 1, ADBR 27 AL 318.

²³² This stands in opposition to an ethnocultural understanding of ‘German’ nationality, which included ethnic Germans outside of the German Empire and excluded naturalised Germans of Slavic descent, Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen*, 325–26.

technicalities of translation but highlights different conceptions of citizenship and the state. Whereas *nationalité* carries centralised and assimilationist notions of ‘one nation,’ *Staatsangehörigkeit* reflected the federal structure of the German Empire which included a plurality of state citizenships. During the period of German rule, Alsace was administratively considered as state of the German Empire (despite formally remaining an imperial territory), and ‘Alsatian citizenship’ thus became an administrative category. In contrast, post-war Alsatians had to prove their Frenchness as ‘quality,’ often in response to denunciations of being ‘un-French’ and in clear contrast with ‘foreign’ inhabitants of Alsace. Neither state had an interest in a regionalist Alsatian identity, yet the German federal state citizenship system allowed for an administrative function of ‘Alsatian’ whereas the French assimilationist practices imposed one uniform ‘nationality.’ Building on the idea that ‘a concept that exists in various languages triggers varying associations, addresses disparate agencies, and slips semantically between the languages,’²³³ I propose that Anglophone scholarship – by using a limiting English term – risks glossing over nuances when imposing an Anglo-Saxon understanding of citizenship on the French and German contexts.

Both French and German citizenship regulations outline the requirements for individuals to gain or lose citizenship. These demarcations constitute the boundaries of the community, i.e. who belongs and why they belong to the nation-state. References to the exercise of citizenship, for example through voting or holding office, are subordinated concerns in these sources. This points to another crucial difference between the English *citizenship*, French *nationalité*, and German *Staatsangehörigkeit*. In English, citizenship signifies a legal category of belonging along with the civic rights and duties attached to belonging to the state. In French and German, the latter is captured in separate terms: *citoyenneté* in French, *Staatsbürgerschaft* in German.²³⁴

²³³ Gehmacher, ‘In/Visible Transfers’, 29.

²³⁴ Gosewinkel, ‘The Dominance of Nationality?’, 93.

Aurélié Audeval aptly captures the gendered relevance of distinguishing between these two terms. Writing in French, she argues ‘until the end of the Second World War, two types of French citizenship [*nationalité*] existed, one for men which includes citizenship [*citoyenneté*] and one for women which omits it.’²³⁵ The unequal exercise of citizenship, resulting in distinctions between active and passive citizens, is central to colonial as well as gendered power imbalances.²³⁶ Both ‘exercising’ and ‘having’ citizenship structured and was structured by gender roles and perceptions of Alsace as border region. Clearly differentiating between these two functions of citizenship – demarcating boundaries and distributing rights – is essential to foreground gendered distinctions between women as reproducers of the national community (i.e. as keepers of ethnic boundaries) and men as performers within the national community (i.e. as participatory citizens).

Exclusive membership

The dual functions of citizenship remain interconnected. Certain duties were not merely the consequence of being a citizen but a boundary of citizenship, as membership in the national community was associated with a sense of duty and allegiance. In early twentieth-century France and Germany, such national allegiance translated into exclusivity. The first article of the French regulations states ‘logically, everyone, since their birth, must have one citizenship, and no one should have several.’²³⁷ Even though the German law code was more ambiguous about this, as citizenship in more than one German state was possible, the acquisition of ‘foreign citizenship’ resulted in the loss of German citizenship.²³⁸ Belonging was limited to only one national community for several reasons. On the one hand, the state had an interest in

²³⁵ Audeval, ‘Une question de catégorie’, 51.

²³⁶ The French translation of Burbank’s and Cooper’s article notably uses the term *citoyenneté* rather than *nationalité*, see Burbank and Cooper, ‘Empire, droits et citoyenneté, de 212 à 1946’, 512–13; Cott, ‘Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934’, 1448–51.

²³⁷ ‘Logiquement, chacun doit posséder, dès sa naissance, une nationalité, et nul ne doit en avoir plusieurs,’ *Résumé Pratique*, part I, section 2, ADBR 121 AL 590.

²³⁸ *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, section 17.2, section 20, ADBR 27 AL 318.

clarifying an individual's legal status, i.e. what laws a person was subjected to and what rights they possessed. On the other hand, state membership was linked to notions of loyalty and national rivalry, which expressed themselves mainly through military service. This became particularly relevant in Alsace during the First World War, when Alsatian men who were drafted into the German army were interned by the immediate post-war French regime. Women's patriotism was contrastingly linked to their role as wives and mothers, owing loyalty to their husbands. Marrying a foreign citizen was therefore framed as change of national and political allegiances, resulting in the loss of native citizenship.

4.2 Gendered citizenship

Birth

The three main ways of gaining citizenship according to French and German laws were birth, marriage, and (non-marital) naturalisation.²³⁹ While dichotomies established in academic and legal discourses juxtapose *ius solis* and *ius sanguinis*, that is citizenship through territory or through descent, I deconstruct this dichotomy by focusing on what connects these two approaches: gaining citizenship by virtue of being born – either somewhere or to someone specific. Deconstructing the dichotomy of 'civic' nationality as 'choice' and 'ethnic' nationality as 'inherited,' Hajdinjak argues that 'ultimately we can see that *all* national communities consist predominantly of members who were "given their membership cards" at birth.'²⁴⁰ Focused on gendered and racialised processes of state/nation formation, Peterson also highlights the understanding of citizenship as birth right, either through 'being born on a nation's soil or of a citizen parent.'²⁴¹ Citizenship is therefore a form of belonging that is predominantly assigned at and through birth, even if joining or leaving that community at a

²³⁹ *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, section 3, ADBR 27 AL 318; *Résumé Pratique*, part II, ADBR 121 AL 590.

²⁴⁰ Hajdinjak, 'Tolerantly Ethnic and Aggressively Civic?', 252.

²⁴¹ Peterson, 'Family Matters in Racial Logics', 193.

later point is possible. Birth and marriage are both intrinsically linked to the gendered concept of the nation-state as family, assigning specific and hierarchical roles to female and male members. French and German legal regulations upheld the principle of patrilineality, meaning that the citizenship of fathers and husbands determined that of their legitimate, dependent family members.

In both French and German law, being born to parents of French or German citizenship, respectively, was the primary form of access to citizenship. Section 4 of the German law of 1913 specifies that a legitimate child takes the citizenship of their father, an illegitimate child that of their mother.²⁴² The first option of gaining citizenship in the French regulations is to be ‘born to French parents.’ Legitimate children also take their father’s citizenship, illegitimate children that of whichever parent is legally recognised first (in practice mostly the mother).²⁴³ The citizenship of the legitimate father thus prevailed over that of the legitimate mother (although conflict between the two was rare, as women virtually always adopted their husband’s citizenship upon marriage).²⁴⁴ These regulations reinforced the institution of heterosexual marriage as norm, secured men’s position as ‘head of the family’ within that normative frame, and protected the lawful family against illegitimate children. Consequently, men acted as formal link between the state and their dependents (both their wife and their legitimate children).

French law complemented this patrilineal descent principle with a territorial approach, regulating the status of children born on French territory whose parents were not French

²⁴² *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, section 4, ADBR 27 AL 318.

²⁴³ *Résumé Pratique*, part II, section A, articles 1-2, 6, ADBR 121 AL 590; Sainsbury underscores the principle of descent as dominant (and gendered) path to citizenship in France, as French fatherhood determined the (legitimate) child’s citizenship, regardless of place of birth, Sainsbury, ‘Gender Differentiation and Citizenship Acquisition’, 31.

²⁴⁴ In the interwar period, this patrilineal descent system was limited amidst populationist concerns, as the French Law of 1927 not only abolished derivative citizenship for French women but also ‘granted French citizenship to the children of French women married to non-naturalized foreigners,’ Camiscioli, ‘Intermarriage, Independent Nationality, and the Individual Rights of French Women’.

citizens. In case neither parent was born on French territory, the child was considered a foreigner until their maturity. In case at least one parent was born on French territory, the child was a French citizen from their birth until their maturity. In both cases, the children's citizenship status was up for debate once they became adults.²⁴⁵ This gender-neutral phrasing – the parent born on French territory could be either father or mother – challenged the patrilineal supremacy and gave relevance to women's birthplace.²⁴⁶ The territorial and the descent principle were not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, French law linked territory-based regulations to descent, taking the origin of parents into account. Notably, citizenship in both countries centred around being born in specific circumstances rather than a civic commitment to the (nation)state or an identity.

Marriage

Hierarchical gender relations and the dominance of a male head of family over female and minor dependents were fundamental to citizenship law. Not only was children's citizenship status determined following a patrilineal descent system, but women risked losing their native citizenship when marrying. Both the German law of 1913 and the *Code Civil* stated that a foreign woman marrying a German or French citizen, respectively, took on the same citizenship as her husband – and in turn lost her previous citizenship. Accordingly, a woman lost her German or French citizenship when marrying a foreigner. Notably, in France the citizenship reform of 1889 waived the requirement of derivative citizenship if the wife would not receive her husband's citizenship upon marriage.²⁴⁷ Sainsbury argues that the First World War 'laid bare the vulnerability of married women with derivative citizenship. In extreme instances they

²⁴⁵ *Résumé Pratique*, part II, section C-D, ADBR 121 AL 590.

²⁴⁶ Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen*, 288.

²⁴⁷ *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, section 6; section 17, article 5, ADBR 27 AL 318; *Résumé Pratique*, part II, section F, article 1; part III, section 1, article 5, ADBR 121 AL 590; the Code Civil of 1804 formally introduced the principle of derivative citizenship referring to 'family unity', Sainsbury, 'Gender Differentiation and Citizenship Acquisition', 31.

were treated as enemy aliens in the country of their birth.’²⁴⁸ Moreover, in March 1917 the French state introduced a law stating that a woman who was ‘subject of an enemy nation’ did not gain French citizenship when marrying a French citizen unless seeking approval from the French minister of justice prior to the wedding.²⁴⁹ After divorce or her husband’s death, a woman did not automatically regain her pre-marital citizenship. The German law of 1913 clarifies these women had to reapply, leaving divorcees or widows in a legally precarious situation.²⁵⁰ Additionally, in German law men’s naturalisation requests included their wife and children by default, whereas women’s applications had to be supported by their male legal guardian, further increasing the legal dependency of women on their male family members.²⁵¹

As discussed in Chapter 3, marital expatriation and naturalisation underscored that married woman did not have independent citizenship but were believed to be politically dependent on their husband. Moreover, a woman’s private decision to marry a foreigner (even if the extent of women’s agency in marriage could be disputed) was equated with changing her political allegiance. Upon marriage, women were expected become part of their husband’s national community (their family as well as their nation-state) – their allegiance to, or rather dependence on, their husbands took precedence over any sense of belonging and allegiance to their native community.

Military service

Both in French and German citizenship laws and the later process of distributing identity cards, military service stands out as primary form of claiming belonging. Gosewinkel argues that extending the conscription range of the state was a major motivating force behind citizenship

²⁴⁸ Sainsbury, 31.

²⁴⁹ ‘l’étrangère sujette d’une nation ennemie,’ [emphasis i.o.], *Résumé Pratique*, part II, section F, article 2, ADBR 121 AL 590.

²⁵⁰ *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, section 10, ADBR 27 AL 318; *Résumé Pratique* (1919), part III, section 1, article 5.

²⁵¹ *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, section 7, section 16, ADBR 27 AL 318.

reforms. Regarding the German law of 1913, he claims that ‘the enforcement of the principle “No national community without defence community” in principle raised the readiness for defence as condition and boundary of citizenship [*Staatsangehörigkeit*], regardless of the ethno-cultural belonging to Germanness.’²⁵² Military service, which at the time was only open to men, tied men to the nation-state differently to women. For foreigners, military service provided an opportunity to prove their loyalty to the nation-state and thus a gateway to citizenship: according to French law, men who served in the French colonies or protectorates could get naturalised;²⁵³ German law allowed for naturalisations of men who had actively served in the German military or navy for at least one year.²⁵⁴

Even though this civic duty was not directly accessible to women, framings of military service as privilege perpetuate nationalist narratives. On top of potentially risking their lives when serving in the army, men could lose their citizenship when they failed to live up to standards of hegemonic masculinity. Prominently, the British state could formally disfranchise conscientious objectors in 1918.²⁵⁵ However, the loss of citizenship due to an absence of or the wrong military service was also inscribed in pre-war German and French law. German citizens who did not comply to the compulsory military service and French citizens taking up military service abroad without prior governmental authorisation could be expatriated.²⁵⁶ The importance of such masculine demonstrations of patriotism was raised during wartime. According to Christa Hämmerle ‘real’ masculinity in wartime societies was only ascribed to those men fighting at the front. ‘In principle, non-fighting men were worth less than fighting (...) soldiers.’²⁵⁷ While the understanding of military service as proof of masculinity as well as

²⁵² Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen*, 326.

²⁵³ *Résumé Pratique*, part II, section E, article a3, ADBR 121 AL 590.

²⁵⁴ *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, section 12, ADBR 27 AL 318.

²⁵⁵ Proctor, ‘Patriotism Is Not Enough’, 175.

²⁵⁶ *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*, section 17, article 3, ADBR 27 AL 318; *Résumé Pratique*, part III, section 1, article 4, ADBR 121 AL 590.

²⁵⁷ Hämmerle, *Heimat/Front*, 19.

patriotism was embedded in French and German citizenship regulations, it did not fully capture the situation in the contested territory of Alsace where both French and German administrators and military officials were distrustful towards the national allegiances of the local residents and soldiers. As I will show in Chapter 5, throughout the identity card procedure military service became an indirect access to citizenship, performed by male relatives.

4.3 Re-configuring belonging in Alsace

Hierarchical classification

Following the armistice of 11 November 1918, a hierarchical system of classification was imposed on the population of Alsace to determine who was ‘French’ and who ‘foreign.’ On 14 December 1918, the French civil-military administration issued an order for the police of ‘liberated’ municipalities which regulated residence, movement, postal services, the press and other aspects of daily life. Article 2 ordered the Town Hall or the police commission to distribute identity cards to everyone above the age of 15 years and resident in a municipality of Alsace-Lorraine. As outlined previously in Chapter 2, these identity cards were divided into four categories, ranging from A to D. Articles 4 and 5 of the order outlined how these identity cards limited free movement. Those of category A could travel across all of liberated Alsace and Lorraine, except a regulated zone along the Swiss border and the Rhine. Those holding card B or C could move in their own and immediately neighbouring areas, whereas those holding a D-card were restricted to their own municipality. B, C, and D-cardholders could ask for special permission from local authorities to extend their travel rights to a specific community if required for their work. Permission for movement beyond the liberated regions to other départements of France had to be requested from mayors and local administrators.²⁵⁸ This re-configuration and re-classification happened in a legal vacuum as the region was only

²⁵⁸ Arrêté du 14 décembre 1918, articles 2, 3, 5, 7, AVES 503 FI 72.

formally restored to the French state through article 51 of the Treaty of Versailles, signed in June 1919 and effective from January 1920. The identity card system was thus only temporary; however, it sparked a process of re-negotiation and re-imagination of national belonging.

The French decision to classify Alsatian residents at all contrasts with the lack thereof following the German annexation of 1871. Because ‘the assumption that all Alsatians were in fact Germans had been one of the primary justifications for the annexation in the first place,’ any Alsatian resident who did not explicitly opt for French citizenship²⁵⁹ became a German citizen.²⁶⁰ After the annexation of 1871, German authorities created a citizenship of Alsace-Lorraine for administrative purposes. Alsatian citizenship was open not only to natives of the region but also to Old German officials working in the region or city administration. Contemporary German statistics therefore did not differentiate between French Alsatian and Old German the same way as French classification systems did. Divisions according to state citizenship (e.g. citizens of Prussia, Baden, or Alsace-Lorraine) included Old German officials as Alsatian; divisions according to birthplace put children of immigrants and those of French Alsatian families in the same category.²⁶¹

However, following the First World War French administrators aimed to undo fifty years of German rule. Boswell therefore argues that ‘French bureaucrats and military officials came armed with an ethnic vision of the borderland,’²⁶² intending to either deny the existence of, sort out, or eliminate any German characteristics of the region. Zahra’s category of national indifference adds an insightful perspective on the French classification of Alsace. According to her, ‘indifference was important to the development of modern nationalism, not only because nationalists reacted so strongly to it, but because it compelled nationalist movements to define

²⁵⁹ Through the option clause of the Treaty of Frankfurt 1871, see Chapter 2.

²⁶⁰ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 540.

²⁶¹ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 27–29.

²⁶² Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 130.

the boundaries of the national community more precisely.’²⁶³ The (perceived) national ambiguity of the region of Alsace and its population led the French civil-military administration to remove any ambiguity by issuing identity cards.

The identity card system did not confer citizenship. However, in the interim period between the armistice and the ratification of the peace treaty, the identity cards were the primary means of conferring belonging to and regulating rights of the inhabitants of Alsace. As Boswell has argued, they ‘constituted a form of identification and discrimination’ which relegated large parts of the population ‘to second-class status.’²⁶⁴ Formal rights of B, C, and D-cardholders were significantly restricted compared to A-cardholders. Moreover, A-cardholders enjoyed more status within the Alsatian society, as appeal letters analysed in Chapter 5 show that those without an identity card A felt marginalised because they were not considered ‘properly’ Alsatian. The introduction of a hierarchical system was not a complete novelty for French configurations of belonging. From the 1830s onwards, the French imperial citizenship system distinguished between ‘citizens’ and ‘subjects’ in their colonies. This practice continued throughout the French Third Republic. While white Algerian colonisers for instance successfully implemented the *Code Civil* in Algeria in the 1870s which granted them the same rights as citizens in Metropolitan France, Muslim Algerians were still considered to be French subjects rather than citizens and only had limited rights.²⁶⁵ To some extent, this imperial tool to integrate residents of ruled territories while maintaining distinctions was also applied in the immediate post-war period in Alsace. While the French state already laid claim to Alsace, the region was yet to be Frenchified – including the removal of German elements described in Chapter 2 – and therefore had to be distinguished from interior France.

²⁶³ Zahra, ‘Imagined Noncommunities’, 108.

²⁶⁴ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 144.

²⁶⁵ Burbank and Cooper, ‘Empire, droits et citoyenneté, de 212 à 1946’, 514–15; Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 7, 16–17; Pedersen, ‘Special Customs’, 58.

Gender order in transition

Based on a more ethnic, descent-based conceptualisation of national belonging, immediate post-war regulations in Alsace challenged both patrilineal and derivative citizenship. Identity cards A were issued to ‘French people and persons born in Alsace-Lorraine whose father and mother were of French origin themselves’ whereas identity cards B were given to ‘persons born in Alsace-Lorraine whose two parents were not both of French origin.’²⁶⁶ The regulations diverged from both French and German citizenship law. Neither did they follow a patrilineal descent system, granting category A to those whose father was ‘of French origin,’ nor did they apply the French territorial principle which only required one parent to be born on French territory. Moreover, it did not distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate children, leaving unclear whether father and mother had to be legal or biological. The status of children whose father was unknown/unconfirmed was not further defined. The divergence from citizenship regulations predominantly affected those issued a card B. In reference to laws regarding patrilineal descent and marital naturalisation, ‘the French state was (...) surprisingly quick to violate this patriarchal legal tradition in the distribution of identity cards.’ Zahra notes that individualistic classification of family members meant that a woman of Old German descent could be issued a card D, her husband of French Alsatian descent a card A, and their children a card B.²⁶⁷ Women who were suddenly categorised as outsiders despite their marriage to men who were recognised as members of the national community thus found themselves in a precarious situation.

Operating in a transition period, post-armistice but pre-peace treaty, the distribution of identity cards ignored Alsatian residents’ legal status. In short, an Alsatian-born woman had lost her

²⁶⁶ ‘les Français et les personnes nées en Alsace-Lorraine dont le père et mère étaient eux-mêmes d’origine française,’ and ‘les personnes nées en Alsace-Lorraine dont les deux ascendants n’étaient pas d’origine française,’ [for clarity, the latter regulation means that one person *was* of French origin], Arrêté du 14 décembre 1918, AVES 503 FI 72; the obscure expression of ‘French origin’ clarified neither if such origin was established through citizenship, place of birth or other factors, nor how many generations back these criteria should apply.

²⁶⁷ Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 154.

native Alsatian citizenship status (i.e. status as citizen of the German federal state Alsace) when marrying a man born in a neighbouring German state, e.g. Palatinate, and was legally classified as Palatinate. However, assuming her family was from Alsace too and her parents had been French citizens before 1871, she still received identity card A. Her Palatinate husband received an identity card D, i.e. a completely different category of belonging, their legitimate children identity card B. By prioritising notions of ethnic purity, the identity cards therefore disrupted the dominance of the male head of family whose legal status no longer determined the status of either his wife or his children.

The rules for conferring French citizenship to inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine either directly or through naturalisation within a year laid out in the Treaty of Versailles (Section V, Annex) did not formally build on the identity card system established in the preceding half-year period. Yet the regulations for direct reinstatement in French citizenship bear significant resemblance with the ‘French origin’ requirement which accorded legitimate and illegitimate children the same citizenship. According to Paragraph 1, persons who lost French citizenship because of the Franco-German Treaty of 1871, their ‘legitimate or natural descendants’ as well as ‘all persons born in Alsace-Lorraine of unknown parents’ were turned into French citizens.²⁶⁸ However, the identity card system and the peace treaty diverge in their gendered implications. The former system explicitly required both parents to be of French descent, thereby assigning new relevance to women’s origin. Neither a woman nor a man could solely determine their children’s status. The latter regulations did not make such requirements and reinstated patrilineal principles, adding that ‘those whose ascendants in the paternal line include a German who migrated to Alsace-Lorraine after July 15, 1870’ did not directly qualify for French citizenship.²⁶⁹ This qualifier addressed the common immigration of men from neighbouring

²⁶⁸ Treaty of Versailles, section V, annex, paragraph 1.

²⁶⁹ Treaty of Versailles, section V, annex, paragraph 1, no.2.

German states along with the Prussian administrators (but disregarded immigration in the maternal line) and limited the influence of Alsatian women in passing on their citizenship.

The common distribution of B category identity cards highlighted the frequency of intermarriages in the region. The Treaty of Versailles attempted to address this issue through the option of naturalisation. Anyone ‘whose ascendants include a Frenchman or Frenchwoman who lost French nationality under the conditions referred to in the said paragraph’ could apply for naturalisation, effectively addressing those who had been excluded because of a German immigrant on the paternal side. Moreover, naturalisation requests of ‘the husband or wife of any person whose French nationality may have been restored under paragraph 1, or who may have claimed and obtained French nationality in accordance with the preceding provisions’ were the only types of request which could not be rejected by French authorities.²⁷⁰ Importantly, this regulation broke with the established principles of marital naturalisation: wives had to apply for naturalisation rather than automatically assume their husband’s citizenship status, while husbands had the option of gaining their wife’s status.

The identity card system was valid only temporarily and the application of the Treaty of Versailles was soon adapted by French authorities to correspond with the French *Code Civil*. According to Vlossak, ‘in late August 1919, the French authorities specified that the child of an A-card father and a D-card mother was recognized as being French, in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, but that the child of a D- card father and A-card mother was not.’²⁷¹ The annex of the treaty regulating the naturalisation of ‘German’ spouses was conditional on an application of naturalisation within a year of the treaty coming into effect. The peace treaty, however, did not specifically refer to the status of initially reintegrated married women, which left them legally vulnerable. If the German husband of a French-Alsatian woman failed to

²⁷⁰ Treaty of Versailles, section V, annex, paragraph 2, no.1, 6.

²⁷¹ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 214.

request naturalisation by January 1921, the French government insisted on applying the regulations of the *Code Civil* and claimed that the woman would maintain the German citizenship she had gained upon marriage. Her formal reintegration as French citizen, valid from November 1918 to January 1921, was thus only a conditional, temporary measure.²⁷²

To an extent, the temporary identity card system challenged dominant patrilineal conceptions of belonging and led to a re-evaluation of women's importance in determining civic status: Alsatians were expected to not only refer to their paternal ancestry but to account for the maternal side of their family tree too. This contrasted with the patrilineal approach dominant in the early twentieth century that ignored married women's native citizenship or birthplace as long as the husband/father held German or French citizenship, respectively. The sudden attention given to women's origin expressed a heightened concern for ethnic purity in the border region, rather than a commitment to gender equality. Notably, the distinction between category A and B targeted children of intermarriages, which posed a considerable challenge to French administrators' national politics. In theory, this could lead to the exclusion of descendants of German immigrant women. In practice (as many of the letters analysed in the following two chapters will show), Alsatian origin on the maternal side was commonly argued to compensate for any Old German paternal ancestors, considering that the majority of intermarriages had been concluded between male immigrants from other parts of the German Empire and local women.²⁷³ This fits with Sainsbury's argument that post-WW1 depopulation concerns in France drew attention to the citizenship rights of mothers, promoting matrilineal access to citizenship so that French women married to immigrants, along with their children, could remain/become French citizens.²⁷⁴ Camiscioli's analysis of the interwar pronatalist movement in France similarly shows that following the war, 'intermarriage with "racially"

²⁷² Vlossak, 215.

²⁷³ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 27.

²⁷⁴ Sainsbury, 'Gender Differentiation and Citizenship Acquisition', 31.

appropriate foreign men was encouraged, as it was necessary for the rebuilding of the national body.²⁷⁵ While Camiscioli particularly underlines the demand for Italian, Spanish, and Polish immigrants and does not mention Germans (presumably due to the tensions between France and Germany during and after the First World War), her analysis suggests that pronatalists argued that marriage to native French women could aid in the integration of such (necessary) immigrants. Efforts to identify any German elements in the region, including non-Alsatian born spouses, highlighted the frequency of intermarriages and the potential loss of citizens. Consequently, French authorities, local individuals, and even historiography emphasised the influence of ‘Alsatian’ women on the status (and possible allegiance) of their children and husbands, diverging from contemporary citizenship regulations. However, the individual classification of married women’s national status (not tied to their husbands’ status) and the re-evaluation of their formal influence on their husbands and children’s status remained temporary and was reversed after the transition period. The implementation of the identity card system constituted a significant divergence from regular citizenship practices in the Metropole. Confronted with linguistic, cultural, and national difference, the French civil-military administration prioritised the identification of ‘foreign’ elements and individuals over a continuation of patriarchal citizenship regulations.

Ethnic visions of Frenchness

The restoration of Alsace and Lorraine to France was framed as return rather than annexation, claiming a ‘moral obligation to redress the wrong done by Germany in 1871 both to the rights of France and to the wishes of the population of Alsace and Lorraine, which were separated from their country.’²⁷⁶ While this phrasing hinted at civic conceptions of nationhood, adding to the narrative of Alsatians deciding to be part of France (even though a frequently evoked

²⁷⁵ Camiscioli, ‘Producing Citizens, Reproducing the “French Race”’, 595.

²⁷⁶ Treaty of Versailles, section V.

plebiscite never took place), the distinction between French Alsatians and Old Germans promoted an ethnicity-based understanding of national belonging.

The Treaty of Versailles (Section V, Annex) integrated parts of Alsatian inhabitants as French citizens, however it stated that ‘Germans born or domiciled in Alsace-Lorraine shall not acquire French nationality by reason of the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France, even though they may have the status of citizens of Alsace-Lorraine. They may acquire French nationality only by naturalisation (...).’²⁷⁷ Carrol frames this as ‘ethnic version of belonging’ which ‘prevent[ed] Alsatians who had been born in the region to German parents from becoming French citizens.’²⁷⁸ Officially the peace treaty’s citizenship regulations for Alsace-Lorraine were unrelated to the previous identity cards, yet both systems distinguished between ‘Germans,’ which was only applied to those who had moved to the region after 1871, and ‘French Alsatians,’ meaning individuals and families who had been French citizens prior to 1871. Moreover, in contrast with the German administrative construction of Alsatian citizenship as sub-category of and qualifier for citizenship of the German Empire (citizens of any federal state were German by virtue of their state membership), the Treaty of Versailles introduced a historically novel distinction between regional legal belonging to Alsace and citizenship of the French state.

The identity card system (along with the ‘purge trials’ mentioned in Chapter 2) constituted a process of ethnic division and indicated a shift towards increasingly racialised notions of Frenchness.²⁷⁹ Ethnic and racialised conceptions of Frenchness seemingly contradicted the republican ideal of civic French nationhood. Especially in the context of intellectual discussions regarding the Alsatian question since the 1870s, Boswell notes that ‘ironically, by 1918, the republican view of nationhood was clearly most on the defensive in the region that,

²⁷⁷ Treaty of Versailles, section V, annex, paragraph 3.

²⁷⁸ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 7.

²⁷⁹ Prott, *The Politics of Self-Determination*, 11.

in theory, exemplified it.’²⁸⁰ Harvey for instance argues that ‘the Triage Commissions and the identity card system both betrayed the spirit of French republicanism, in abandoning the principle of *jus soli*, or the inclusive, territorial definition of citizenship, and in undermining the principle of legal equality among French citizens.’²⁸¹ Such ‘betrayal’ only appears extraordinary if disconnected from the French imperial context. French imperial rule shows that such republicanism had only been an ideal, limited to those who complied to certain norms of Frenchness.

To some extent the ethnic-based hierarchical classification of Alsace by French administrators reflected French colonial practices. This is not merely a historiographical analytical comparison, but contemporary French officials and intellectuals drew parallels between French colonies and Alsace-Lorraine. Pointing out connections between French intellectual debates on Alsace-Lorraine and French African colonies, Jean Elisabeth Pedersen underscores tensions between republican ideals and rights of national citizens in the French Metropole and the occupation of colonial subjects overseas.²⁸² A French wartime proposal ‘for dealing with the significant German minority in Alsace Lorraine drew considerably on France's colonial experience. The despised German “immigrants” comprised a valuable workforce, so they could not simply be expelled en masse, but neither could they be safely assimilated. Germans in Alsace were therefore to become French “subjects but not citizens.”’²⁸³ Zahra thus persuasively argues that ‘the French obsession with preventing racial “contamination” in Alsace-Lorraine formed part of a broader set of colonial discourses and practices in the French colonial empire.’²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 161.

²⁸¹ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 553–54.

²⁸² Pedersen, ‘Alsace-Lorraine and Africa’, 20–21.

²⁸³ Zahra, ‘The “Minority Problem” and National Classification’, 153.

²⁸⁴ Zahra, 146.

Taking French colonial practices into account is essential in order to challenge the image of French republicanism. The descent-based categorisation of Alsace may have been extraordinary in comparison to civic ideals in the predominantly white, assimilated French Metropole, yet they appear much less unusual in the context of French colonial rule. However, the conception and treatment of Alsatian residents in the French European periphery and colonial subjects elsewhere are not to be equated. Pedersen very importantly underlines that that firstly, ‘it was easier for another European to gain French citizenship than for a French colonial subject to do so.’ Moreover, ‘the denial of citizenship to colonial subjects was particularly exclusionary because unlike the citizens of independent countries, colonial subjects had no alternate citizenship status to call their own.’²⁸⁵ Alsatian residents, even those classified as being of ‘mixed’ or ‘foreign’ origin, could still appeal their identity cards or remain German citizens and move to the German Empire.

The appeal procedure as well as triage trials that punished even A-cardholders for support of the German regime show that a racialised and ethnic view of Frenchness coexisted with ‘one based on imputed national sentiment, morality, and culture.’²⁸⁶ French ethnicity (according to the criteria of the identity card order) was not always a sufficient protection against discrimination, neither was it the only way of gaining an A-card and being eventually reintegrated as French citizen. Chapter 5 and 6 will demonstrate that Alsatian individuals appealing their identity card drew attention to additional layers of national belonging. Ultimately, the initial descent-based classification through the order of December 1918 clashed with prior conceptions of civic Frenchness in the Metropole and simultaneously mirrored racialised understandings of Frenchness applied to the colonies.

²⁸⁵ Pedersen, ‘Special Customs’, 62–63.

²⁸⁶ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 160.

5. RE-IMAGINING NATIONAL BELONGING

National belonging is not solely determined in a unidirectional, top-down process of nation-state building. Legalistic categories can be challenged by individual actors ‘from below’ and their conceptions of what it means to belong to the nation. Following the First World War, residents of Alsace appealed decisions by the French civil-military administration, which had classified them via different identity cards. This chapter is a case study of around 40 appeal cases in spring 1919 in the district of Wissembourg, a town in the north of Alsace at the border to the German state of Palatinate. In order to convince French authorities to revise their decision, petitioners highlighted their manifold ties to the local and national community, proposing a multi-dimensional conception of national belonging. Top-down and bottom-up imaginations of (national) community were not strictly separate processes but were constructed in dialogue with each other. This negotiation of status and belonging shows that national communities are not imagined in a static way – rather, a variety of actors are (re-)imagining their national communities in sometimes contradictory ways to relate them to their local contexts. The focus of this chapter lies on how the appeal processes promoted a gendered conception of national belonging and patriotism, both through the formalities of process (who appealed, why, and how) and through individuals’ constructions of belonging.

In the first section, I outline the gendered process of requesting a different identity card. I highlight how the transitional period in post-war Alsace constituted a phase of contestation in which many Alsatian residents could no longer take national belonging for granted. In the second section, I focus on the impact of intermarriages on appeals and its relation to women’s role in the national community as national ‘assimilators’ of husbands and children. In the third section I analyse the references to military service and public reputation which were associated with male citizenship. Ultimately, I show how arguments advanced by Alsatian residents relied

on intertwined notions of civic and ethnic belonging that reinforced gender roles of the male citizen and the female caregiver.

5.1 Negotiating belonging: appeal processes

Appeal cases

From December 1918 on, the French civil-military administration divided the population of Alsace in four categories according to the identity cards A, B, C, and D. This classification process was soon contested, as demonstrated by numerous appeal requests demanding a different, *better*, category. All appeal cases analysed in this thesis requested a change of identity card from model B to model A (the type ensuring the most rights) and all request forms indicate a successful appeal.²⁸⁷ Most appeal cases consist of various combinations of the following documents: an identification form, a form requesting a change of classification (which included the administration's decision), appeal letters, birth or marriage certificates, certificates of good moral behaviour, and police reports.²⁸⁸ An appeal could either include a single individual or several family members (parents and children, spouses, or siblings). The decision regarding a change of identity card was first taken by the local *commission de triage*, signed by the mayor of Wissembourg, and forwarded to the military administration of the territory of Wissembourg. The focus of my analysis will lie on the identification forms, the request forms, and the appeal letters. Occasionally I will also draw on a body of letters written from December 1918 to March 1919, asking for the release of interned German soldiers married to local Alsatian women, resident in Strasbourg. This separate body of letters highlights the struggle of intermarried couples regarding their potential treatment as suspicious foreigners from the beginning of the

²⁸⁷ The order of December 1918 declared that those with a card B had the option of being re-classified, suggesting that card C or card D holder did not, see Arrêté du 14 décembre 1918, AVES 503 FI 72.

²⁸⁸ In the following all names mentioned in the appeal documents have been pseudonymised or anonymised, although the German or French (or ambiguous) character of the name has been kept in case of pseudonyms.

interim regime and offers insight into conceptions of local integration in the Alsatian community.

By outlining why they should be granted identity card A, residents of Alsace constructed an alternative understanding of belonging to both Alsace and the French nation-state, contesting the regulations of the identity card order. This does not mean the appeal letters accurately and comprehensively reflect individuals' private conceptions of belonging, considering the objective of appealing as approval by the French authorities. Boswell's claim that individuals adapted to the expectations of the state (when discussing denunciations) applies here too. He stresses that 'denouncers used the language of nationalism because this was the language the state wanted to hear, and the language denouncers knew would work.'²⁸⁹ However, appellants not only referred to existing formal criteria of citizenship and identity cards but proposed additional narratives of belonging as a way of challenging their original classification.

The process of reconfiguring national and local identities in Alsace 'was initiated by the heavy hand of the state, but once underway it did not always remain under state control, and the process was soon relayed by local inhabitants eager to prove their patriotic credentials, searching for ways to make their voices heard, or motivated by personal gain, sentiments of revenge, and long-standing village feuds.'²⁹⁰ The alternative constructions of belonging in these appeal cases are significant not despite their utilitarian nature but precisely because they were built through direct interaction between individuals and state authorities. The successful appeal of initial classifications demonstrates that bottom-up conceptions of national belonging existed in dialogue with top-down orders. I am therefore not strictly comparing legal framings to individual constructions of belonging. Rather, the conceptions of national belonging laid out in the appeal cases were entangled with legalistic regulations. Appeals were a direct response

²⁸⁹ Boswell, 'From Liberation to Purge Trials in the "Mythic Provinces"', 157.

²⁹⁰ Boswell, 130–31.

to legal orders, sometimes reflecting formal requirements, sometimes challenging them, and in turn shaped Alsatian belonging as administrators revised identity cards.

Contested belonging

The transition period in early 1919 required French administrators and Alsatian resident to re-imagine and clearly define what belonging to France and Alsace meant. Parts of the Alsatian population had harboured Francophile sentiments for decades, fuelled by the German wartime rule; for others local connections across the state borders had a more immediate impact on their conception of belonging. In between France and Germany but distinct from either national ideal, Alsace remained characterised by national ambiguity. Yet, the classification of the Alsatian population and the appeals of identity cards represent a moment in which both the French state and individual Alsatians had to spell out why Alsatians did, or did not, belong. For many of those born in Alsace (especially those born after 1871), national belonging was no longer a birth right they could take for granted. In contrast to Hajdinjak's observation that 'all national communities consist predominantly of members who were "given their membership cards" at birth,'²⁹¹ identity cards were (re-)distributed to the adult Alsatian population in 1918 and 1919. The different classification of people who were born in the same region and/or had lived there together for decades challenged their conceptions of community. Despite the potential for national indifference in Alsace, 'remaining on the national sidelines was no longer simple' once the French administration started to identify and remove 'foreign' characters of the region in 1918.²⁹² This especially affected Alsatians who had been classified as nationally ambiguous through a B card. Regardless of whether these individuals were fervent French nationalists in their everyday life, they had to prove their Frenchness when requesting a card A.

²⁹¹ Hajdinjak, 'Tolerantly Ethnic and Aggressively Civic?', 252.

²⁹² Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities', 101.

Even though the identity cards did not in fact confer citizenship (which was determined through the Treaty of Versailles), this was unclear to many contemporary Alsatians who suspected the cards to have a direct impact on their citizenship status. Being in the possession of identity card A not only conferred extended rights, but also a higher status of belonging to both Alsace and France. For instance, denunciation letters were commonly signed off adding ‘Card A,’ suggesting a superior moral authority.²⁹³ The conflation of citizenship and identity cards becomes clear in the identification forms filled out as part of the appeal processes. When asked for their citizenship (*nationalité*), almost half of the individuals responded with ‘Alsatian B’ or ‘Category B,’ thereby giving their identity card status rather than their legal citizenship. Many others registered ‘Alsatian’ as their citizenship – a practice which highlighted the difficulty of transferring German conceptions of citizenship into the new French context.²⁹⁴ As outlined in Chapter 4, ‘Alsatian’ had been the state citizenship or *Staatsangehörigkeit* of many residents of Alsace according to German law. However, Alsatian citizenship or *nationalité* did not exist in the French legal system. It is unlikely that Alsatian residents who registered themselves as ‘Alsatian’ intended to promote an Alsatian nation. Rather, their answers reflected the German administrative structures and German categorisation. Furthermore, registering themselves as Alsatian (rather than German, as most Alsatians had been German citizens until the end of the war) signified a distancing from Germany, indirectly suggesting a proximity to France.

As outlined in Chapter 4, the distribution of identity cards was set up according to supposedly objective criteria – the origin (usually the birthplace) of one’s parents. However, the possibility of appeal made the status of belonging in post-war Alsace negotiable. Firstly, the civil-military administration determined layers of national belonging through origin. Secondly, individuals

²⁹³ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 143; also see ADBR 414 D 1973.

²⁹⁴ In comparison, only half of the non-Alsatians recorded themselves as ‘German,’ whereas the other half noted their state citizenship; answers based on 32 identification forms: 14 Alsatian B, 6 Alsatian, 5 German, 3 Prussian, 2 Category B, 1 Palatinate, 1 German through marriage, see ADBR 414 D 1973-1975.

requested to be classified in a higher category drawing on gendered notions of origin, local belonging, and patriotism. Thirdly, the civil-military administration approved or rejected these requests, thereby modifying their initial criteria on a case-to-case basis. Building on Harvey's claim that 'the success of such appeals, and the consideration of both descent and sentiment in separating "Frenchmen" from "Germans," reveal just how arbitrary the classification process was,'²⁹⁵ I propose that the successful appeals demonstrate that a sense of subjective national identity constructed by appellants contributed to multidimensional conceptions of Frenchness in Alsace.

The order of December 1918 declared that 'after examination by the sorting commissions of their particular situation, the persons belonging to category *b* will be able, exceptionally, to receive the card *a*.'²⁹⁶ There were no formal criteria for approving or rejecting the appeals, except that it should only happen 'exceptionally.' According to Harvey, 'Triage Commissions leaned toward indulgence' but were likely to turn down 'applicants who had demonstrated pro-German sympathies.'²⁹⁷ Given that the Wissembourg files only contain approved appeal requests, my analysis does not engage with arguments brought forward by rejected candidates. The approved requests suggest that authorities handling the appeals not only considered the primary criterion of birthplace but also took notions of national sentiment and loyalty into account. The pre-printed request forms (which indicate a formalisation of the appeal procedure) include not only the decision of the committee, but also a few lines of 'observations' that presumably influenced the decision making. Virtually all approved forms analysed here note the origin of the appellant's parents (which in theory disqualified them for category A). Moreover, they noted that the committee has obtained 'favourable' intelligence regarding the

²⁹⁵ Harvey, 'Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?', 549.

²⁹⁶ 'après examen par les commissions de triage de leur situation particulière, les personnes appartenant à la catégorie *b* pourront, exceptionnellement recevoir la carte *a*,' Arrêté du 14 décembre 1918, AVES 503 FI 72.

²⁹⁷ Harvey, 'Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?', 550.

‘sentiments’ of the appellant. How such information was obtained was not further clarified.²⁹⁸

One more detailed observation reads:

‘daughter of a German who came to live in Alsace in 1836 and of an Alsatian mother. information received from the population about the sentiments regarding the Alsations is favourable’²⁹⁹

Francophile sentiments and positive judgement from community members were thus an influential factor that could make up for a non-Alsatian born parent. Consequently, an individual’s or their family’s ties to the local community gained importance, considering their national sentiments and local standing were confirmed by ‘information received from the population.’

Gendered process

The process of re-classification reinforced gendered family ties. The administrative process promoted men’s role as heads of family: forms were set up to be filled out by men, minors were predominantly represented by their fathers, and letters advocating for someone else were predominantly written by male family members. The appeal processes furthermore entangled individual requests and family relations: even though request forms were set up for a single person, they required information regarding parents as well as spouses.

Considering that the identity cards were descent-based, and thus disconnected from one’s own marital status, appeal requests were meant to be filed individually. In short, married women were categorised independently of their husband’s status and filled out a separate request form if they asked for re-categorisation. However, other parts of the administrative procedure recorded married women’s personal information in connection to their husbands. Most appeal

²⁹⁸ A few of the appeal files were accompanied by police reports, yet these only made up a small proportion of the appeal cases and did not correspond to the number of times ‘favourable intelligence’ was noted.

²⁹⁹ ‘fille d’allemand venu habiter l’Alsace en 1836 et d’une mère alsacienne. renseignements obtenus dans la population sur ses sentiments à l’égard des Alsaciens lui sont favorables,’ [decapitalisation of ‘information’ in the original], ADBR 414 D 1974.

requests in this sample were accompanied by an identification form, which required a person's name, place and date of birth, profession, residence, and citizenship. Additionally, it asked for the name, place and date of birth, and citizenship of not only one's parents but also one's *wife* and her parents. These forms were hence primarily designed for men who not only recorded their own but also their wife's information. In the present sample, two thirds of the forms were filled out by men (the majority of them married), one third by women (see table 1). Importantly, these identification forms did not constitute an appeal, which was filed through a separate request form. It is possible that these forms were not limited to appeals but also required for other administrative processes. The Wissembourg files for instance contained several identification forms that were not accompanied by further appeal documents, a few handwritten versions dating back to January 1919.

TABLE 1: IDENTIFICATION FORMS

	<i>Number of forms</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Women	10	32.3
<i>married/widowed</i>	7	22.6
<i>unmarried</i>	3	9.7
Men	21	67.7
<i>married/widowed</i>	14	45.2
<i>Unmarried</i>	7	22.6
Total	31	100

Sources: administrative identification forms, Wissembourg 1919, ADBR 414 D 1973-1975; own calculation.

Even though appeals were formally filed by the petitioners themselves (i.e. a husband was not meant to appeal his wife's card but she requested the change herself), a quarter of the accompanying appeal letters were not written by the appellant themselves but on behalf of them (see table 2). Most commonly, fathers wrote on behalf of their minor children. This reinforced their roles as head of the family, taking care of their dependent family members.³⁰⁰ Several of

³⁰⁰ Only three of the children were slightly above the age of majority (21), but had minor siblings, in their cases a single request form was filed for them as siblings. All of the minor children were above the age of 15; information regarding children under the age of 15, i.e. without their own identity card, was already noted on the card of the 'head of the family' – in the present sample of identification forms, these were men.

these men emphasise that they are ‘holding the identity card A, but my two children (...) have been issued the card B,’³⁰¹ and one man explicitly points out ‘because my wife is a German, my children have received the identity card B and are therefore only entitled to travel freely in this district and the neighbouring district.’³⁰² The appeal documents give no further indication whether fathers wrote these letters in their role as legal guardian and thus fulfilled a legal requirement, or if gendered practices and strategic considerations played a role. Considering D-classified wives were the reason their children had received card B in the first place, they were potentially considered less suitable to appeal on behalf of their children.

TABLE 2: APPEAL LETTERS

	<i>Number of letters</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Appeal only for oneself</i> ³⁰³	26	74.3
<i>Female writer</i>	10	28.6
<i>Male writer</i>	16	45.7
<i>Appeal for children</i>	7	20.0
<i>Female writer</i>	2	5.7
<i>Male writer</i>	5	14.3
<i>Appeal for siblings</i>	2	5.7
<i>Female writer</i>	0	0.0
<i>Male writer</i>	2	5.7
<i>Total</i>	35	100

Sources: appeal letters for re-categorisation, Wissembourg 1919, ADBR 414 D 1974-1975; own calculation.

Siblings’ appeals were also characterised by gendered hierarchies. In one case four siblings co-signed their appeal letter and submitted a shared request form, giving it a more collaborative appearance; yet in the shared request form and letter the two brothers were still named before their sisters rather than being ordered according to their age.³⁰⁴ In the second case, even though Maurice was the only minor among his siblings, his two older sisters only appear as side note

³⁰¹ ‘Je suis titulaire de la carte d’identité A, mais à mes deux enfants (...), il a été attribué la carte B,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁰² ‘Dadurch daß meine Ehefrau eine Deutsche ist, haben meine Kinder die Identitätskarte B erhalten und sind infolgedessen nur berechtigt im Kreise und den angrenzenden Kreisen ungehindert zu reisen,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁰³ In three cases the primary appeal was accompanied by a plea on behalf of the child or siblings of the letter writer (once a mother requested her daughter’s category to be changed, twice a brother advocated for his siblings).

³⁰⁴ ADBR 414 D 1974.

in his appeal request, as he added at the very end of his letter ‘my two sisters (...) being in the same situation as me, I have the honour to request the same favour for them.’³⁰⁵ Maurice’s letter presents himself as being responsible for his sisters. Moreover, their wish for a different identity card appears to be of secondary importance, only being an appendix to his letter.

Women took on more prominent roles in the appeal process only when a male guardian was unavailable. Out of the women who filled out the identification forms, half were married to German (non-Alsatian) husbands and a third were unmarried. They therefore either did not have a husband to fill out the form for them or they opted for their own form, maybe because they considered their husband’s origin as disadvantage.³⁰⁶ Similarly, women took on the responsibility of writing appeal letters to the administration when their husbands were dead, abroad, or interned. Hélène requested identity card A for her son, emphasising her status as ‘Alsatian category A’ and adding that her husband is currently in the United States.³⁰⁷ The widow Jeanne included a request to change her daughter’s identity card when appealing her own B status; while she was in a more disadvantaged position, her husband was dead and could therefore not write on their behalf.³⁰⁸ This is further illustrated by the sample of appeal letters written to the French civil-military administration in Strasbourg in December 1918, as French Alsatian women asked for the release of their German-origin husbands who had been interned because of their German military service.³⁰⁹ The responsibility of negotiating their family’s right of belonging was hence strategically assumed by whoever was in the best negotiating position. While men were the default negotiator not only for themselves but also for female

³⁰⁵ ‘Mes 2 sœurs (...) se trouvant dans la même situation que moi, j’ai l’honneur de solliciter pour elles la même faveur,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁰⁶ One married couple filled out separate forms for each person; it is unclear whether any of the other married women were widowed. Several of the women replaced ‘wife’ with a handwritten ‘husband’ when giving their husband’s details.

³⁰⁷ ADBR 414 1974.

³⁰⁸ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁰⁹ ADBR 121 AL 906.

relatives, women could take on this responsibility if their ties to Alsace and France were more obvious.

TABLE 3: INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING RE-CLASSIFICATION

	<i>Number of petitioners</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Women	19	40.4
<i>married/widowed</i>	5	10.6
<i>unmarried</i>	14	29.8
Men	28	59.6
<i>married/widowed</i>	13	27.7
<i>unmarried</i>	15	31.9
Total	47*	100

Sources: appeal request forms to file for re-classification, Wissembourg 1919, ADBR 414 D 1974-1975; own calculation.

*the total numbers in table 1, 2, and 3 vary because not all appeal requests were accompanied by an identification form or appeal letter, and some identification forms were not accompanied by further appeal documents

Even when excluding those writing a on behalf of female dependents, almost two thirds of the appellants were men.³¹⁰ (see table 3) Assuming that it is unlikely that couples of different origins had significantly more sons than daughters, this gender disparity suggests that either women's appeal requests were kept somewhere else, lost, not stored at all, or that women were less likely to appeal their identity card B. The latter explanation is likely, considering that many of the appeal letters constructed the restrictions imposed by identity card B in a gendered manner. Restricted movement and lower chances at employment impacted women and men to different degrees. Men predominantly highlighted the impact of restricted movement on their careers. Maurice complained:

‘Before starting my studies at the Faculty of Law in Strasbourg soon, I am facing great difficulties regarding the travel between Strasbourg and

³¹⁰ Based on the request forms, 28 out of 47 appellants were men, moreover 23 out of 35 appeal letters were written by men (although a few of these were written by fathers/brothers and included female appellants too).

Wissembourg. (...) Furthermore, the card B is a great obstacle for my future.’³¹¹

In contrast, women rarely highlighted their need to earn money. The two dominant themes regarding their motivation for extended rights of a card A were education and visiting family in other parts of Alsace or interior France. Josephine for instance stressed in two consecutive appeal letters that she requires a card A to take care of her old grandparents in the south of Alsace ‘where I could not go see them since 1914.’³¹² This was not limited to young women. The 58-year old Marguerite emphasised:

‘my only sister still alive (...) lives in Paris for 44 years. (...) Aged 64 years she is suffering from ill-health and begs me to come see her as soon as possible.’³¹³

Women, as well as a few men, thus used family members residing in interior France to highlight both their pragmatic need to travel and their national ties to France. Several women (or their fathers) moreover claimed they wanted to travel to Strasbourg or other parts of France ‘to perfect their French language skills.’³¹⁴ The gendered restrictions and aspirations of the appellants became particularly obvious when differences between sisters and brothers were spelled out. Georges explained his son ‘will now have to search a position (...) and my daughter will have to place herself in France to perfect her French language.’³¹⁵ Even more clearly, Charles wrote that both his son and his daughter got assigned a B-card before proceeding to request only his son’s re-categorisation to ‘further train and perfect his profession.’³¹⁶ Although category B was commonly understood as (partial) exclusion from the national community, the

³¹¹ ‘Devant commencer mes études à la Faculté de Droit à Strasbourg prochainement, j’éprouve de grandes difficultés pour le voyage entre Strasbourg et Wissembourg (...) En outre la carte B est un grand obstacle pour mon avenir,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³¹² ADBR 414 D 1974.

³¹³ ‘Ma seule sœur encore en vie (...) réside à Paris depuis 44 ans. Agée de 64 ans elle vient d’être frappée par la maladie et me prie de venir la voir le plutôt possible,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³¹⁴ ‘pour se perfectionner dans la langue française,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³¹⁵ ‘Mon fils (...) devra maintenant (...) se chercher une position, et ma fille, pour se perfectionner dans la langue française, devra se placer en France,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³¹⁶ ADBR 414 D 1974.

more pragmatic advantages of category A were more urgent for men trying to obtain employment or continue their business beyond their district borders. Women could moreover hope to profit from a higher category of their male relatives (fathers, brothers, husbands) without going through the administrative efforts of the appeal processes – this is also reflected in the much lower number of married women applying for re-classification compared to unmarried women.

The appeal documents show that identity cards were understood as qualifier of national belonging, with category A understood as being more ‘Alsatian’ and more ‘French’ than others. The appeal processes provided an opportunity to negotiate one’s individual category as well as the boundaries of national belonging, as criteria for category A were changed and expanded on a case-by-case basis. These administrative processes were deeply gendered, as women and men had different motivations to acquire identity card A and were confronted with an androcentric administrative process. However, gender was not the only axis of power as men with a foreign citizenship or lower identity card than their wives lost bargaining power due to their weaker ties to the French nation-state. The main factors of negotiating identity cards – mixed origin/intermarriage and national sentiments – further maintained gendered ties to the nation, as the following two sections will show.

5.2 Women as ‘assimilators’: intermarriage

Local mothers

The official criteria for being assigned identity card A considered the origin of both parents, diverging from patrilineal descent systems in both contemporary French and German citizenship law. Because ‘origin’ was predominantly interpreted as birthplace (parents and grandparents who had been born in Alsace prior to its German annexation were considered to be of French origin), women’s pre-marital belonging gained relevance. In short, the birthplace

and family of mothers could determine one's identity card. The appeal letters reflected this newly gained relevance of women's descent. Both the identification and the request form asked for date and place of birth of both mothers and fathers. When asked about both parents' citizenship in the identification forms, people repeatedly answered with two diverging citizenships or simply indicated the region of their birthplace. Married women's national belonging, for the sake of the appeal procedure, was therefore no longer understood as being determined by her husband but by her birthplace. When giving detailed accounts of their family tree, appellants therefore included their maternal side. Elise for example listed:

'My paternal grandfather Meyer Paul is born in Hüttenheim (Alsace) (...). And my paternal grandmother Thomas Katharina is born in Hüttenheim (...). My maternal grandfather Graf Pierre is born (...) in Schweighofen of parents born in Schweighofen (Palatinate) and Obersehbach (Alsace) under the French regime. My maternal grandmother Graf Madeleine née Remy is born (...) in Altenstadt (Alsace). My father Paul Meyer is born (...) in Hüttenheim (Alsace). My mother Graf Maria is born (...) in Schweighofen (Palatinat).'

³¹⁷

While at first glance this looks like relatively trivial and basic biographical information, the mentioning of all women's native family names and birth places stands out from androcentric accounts that erase women's biographical details before or after her wedding.

Virtually all appeal letters noted both parents' origin (which, compared to citizenship regulations, was extraordinary in itself), yet many specifically highlighted their mother's French Alsatian family. In most of the present cases, the appellants were children of Alsatian-born mothers and Palatinate-born fathers. This matches Uberfill's observation that intermarriage in Alsace reached its highest levels among workers and craftsmen, most of whom came from the neighbouring German states of Baden, Württemberg, and Palatinate; in two

³¹⁷ 'Mon grand-père du coté paternel [...] est né à Hüttenheim (Alsace) (...). Et ma grand-mère du coté paternel [...] est née à Hüttenheim (...). Mon grand-père du coté maternel [...] est né (...) à Schweighofen de parents qui étaient nés à Schweighofen (Palatinat) et Obersehbach (Alsace) sous le régime français. Ma grand-mère du coté maternel [...] est née (...) à Altenstadt (Alsace). Mon père [...] est né (...) à Hüttenheim (Alsace). Ma mère [...] est née (...) à Schweighofen (Palatinat),' ADBR 414 D 1974.

thirds of the cases, an Old German man married an Alsatian woman rather than vice versa.³¹⁸

In several appeal letters, individuals implied the ties to Alsace and France were stronger than those to the neighbouring German state by giving much more space to the description of their maternal family. Claire is one among many claiming that

‘my mother (...) is of absolutely French origin and comes from one of the oldest French families in Wissembourg, and several members of her family have served (...) under the French banners.’³¹⁹

Alice similarly wrote:

‘My father immigrated to Alsace as a young man in 1857 or 58. He lived and he died in Alsace. My mother was Alsatian of French origin (former French teacher until 1871).’³²⁰

Both women not only note their mother’s French origin but add further details of their relatives gendered commitment to France (military service and education). Women’s local roots were therefore used as qualifier for national belonging – if one’s entire maternal family had proven their Frenchness, the argument was, oneself should also be recognised as a first-class citizen. Josephine’s letter illustrates the little space given to appellant’s fathers origin:

‘I am Alsatian born in Thann (...). My mother is also born (...) in Thann and my grandparents like my entire family on the maternal side are Alsations of old stock. Except my father who is born (...) in Coblenz. [Palatinate]’³²¹

Throughout the negotiating process, women’s native community thus not only became equal to men’s (through the order of December 1918) but could make up for men’s lack of local/national ties. The petitioners cited above gave extended space to their mother’s descent (in contrast to the prior patrilineal descent system in citizenship law) out of necessity: their

³¹⁸ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 27, 108–9.

³¹⁹ ‘Ma mère (...) est d’origine absolument française et est issue d’une des plus anciennes familles françaises de Wissembourg, et plusieurs membres de sa famille ont servi (...) sous les drapeaux français,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³²⁰ ‘Mon père est immigré dans l’Alsace comme jeune homme en 1857 ou 58. Il a vécu et il est mort en Alsace. Ma mère était Alsacienne origine française,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³²¹ ‘Je suis alsacienne née à Thann (...). Ma mère aussi est née (...) à Thann et mes grand’parents comme toute la famille de côté maternel sont alsaciens de vieille souche. Toute notre parenté reste en Alsace ou en France et sont alsaciens ou français. Exepté mon père qui est né (...) à Coblenz,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

fathers were not born in Alsace. Residents of Alsace were certainly aware of the patrilineal citizenship regulations, however in the case of the petitioners analysed here patrilineality rarely worked in favour of the appellant. Pragmatism and the aspiration for a higher identity card thus took prevalence over established gendered rules. In contrast, Louis explicitly referred to citizenship law:

‘I myself am born (...) in Wissembourg and all my children are born here. As the father’s nationality is decisive for this, they should receive category A and not B.’³²²

This plea shows that Louis interpreted identity cards as equivalent to citizenship, meaning that citizenship regulations should trump the identity card order. While it may appear logical that he cites this regulation, which works in his children’s favour, it was not formally valid law at that time. Even though the father’s citizenship did in fact determine the citizenship of his legitimate children according to both German and French regulations, according to the transitional identity card regulations the father’s A-card did not confer an A-card to his children. Both approaches outlined in this paragraph were utilitarian – in Louis’ case his own A-cardholder status was the most promising argument, for children of Alsatian mothers and Old German fathers it was not. Louis’ letter was the only letter in the entire cluster of Wissembourg appeals archived together which referred to the supposed dominance of patrilineal descent. It is thus not so much noteworthy for his use of the patrilineal descent system in itself, but because it sticks out from the complete disregard for the dominant legalistic construction of national belonging in his contemporaries’ appeals.

Another major divergence from contemporary citizenship law, which was also included in the citizenship regulations for Alsace-Lorraine in the Treaty of Versailles, is the lack of

³²² ‘Ich selbst bin (...)zu Wissembourg geboren sowie meine sämtlichen Kinder hier geboren, [...] müßten dieselben, indem die Nationalität des Vaters hierfür maßgebend ist, Kategorie A u. nicht B bekommen,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

differentiation between legitimate and illegitimate children. The order of December 1918 only declared that both parents ought to be of French origin, not clarifying whether the origin of one's legal or biological father would prevail if they differed. Consequently, two appellants in Wissembourg successfully appealed their B classification by emphasising that their mother's Old German husband was not their biological father. Paul described how two years after his illegitimate birth his mother married a German whose surname he received. He continued:

'Parents and grandparents, also the more distant grandparents, are all born Alsations, so that, if my mother had married my real father and not the B., I would have received card A.'³²³

Taking the repeated change of citizenship through annexation and citizenship into account, François juxtaposes his French Alsatian roots with his own and his mother's legal status:

'My mother is Alsatian (French) like her parents and her ancestors (...) Through the Peace of Frankfurt my mother has become Alsatian (German) and as a result of this as her son I had the same citizenship. Given that my mother married a German on 31 October 1872 [9 years after his birth] she has received the citizenship of her husband and since he was willing to become my father, the same arrangement applied to me. Despite all these circumstances I am French by origin, I was it and I became it again.'³²⁴

Both men turn their illegitimate birth to at least one French Alsatian parent into the centrepiece to their claim to national belonging, dismissing the influence of their legal father (whose name they carry and who François put down as his father on his identification forms). The fact that both their appeals were successful as well as the order of December 1918 point to tensions between the distribution of identity cards in Alsace and dominant ways of determining belonging to nation-states. An ethnic vision of French Alsatian linked to the notion of origin in

³²³ 'Eltern und Großeltern, auch die entfernten Großeltern, sind alle geborene Elsässer, so daß ich, wenn meine Mutter meinen richtigen Vater und nicht den Barleemann geheiratet hätte, ich Karte A bekommen hätte,' ADBR 414 D 1974.

³²⁴ 'Ma mère est Alsacienne (Française) comme ses parents et ses aïeux (...) Par la paix de Francfort ma mère est devenue Alsacienne (Allemande) et par suite de cela comme fils j'ai eu la même nationalité. Vu que ma mère a conclu un mariage avec un Allemand le 31 Octobre 1872 elle a reçu la nationalité de son mari et comme il a daigné souscrire comme père, j'ai su le même Arrangement. Malgré toutes ces circonstances je suis Français d'origine, je l'étais et je le suis redevenue,' ADBR 414 D 1975.

this case prevailed over the gendered principle of family unity, as both the legal impact and any potential nationalist influence of legal but non-biological fathers was disregarded.

Local wives

Intermarriage affected the appeal of identity cards in a second way: being married to an ‘Alsatian’ individual (meaning an A-cardholder) could benefit one’s appeal for category A. The relevance of the origin of spouses was not only highlighted in individuals’ letters. Both the identification forms and the request forms asked for information regarding spouses. Identification forms filled out by married men recorded personal details of their married women (instead of having them fill out a separate form) and request forms required the appellant to state the category of identity card issued to one’s spouse.³²⁵ Both the civil-military administration asking for the status of spouses and the answers given by Alsatian residents indicate a shift in gendered conceptions of national belonging from men’s (legal) belonging to the nation-state as independent from their marital status to a framing of men as family members and spouses.

Even though German and French citizenship law both enforced gendered marital expatriation and marital naturalisation (i.e. women’s citizenship had to follow the citizenship of their husband),³²⁶ the majority of married men filling out the identification recorded a different citizenship for their wife than for themselves.³²⁷ Only a few answers clarified ‘German through marriage’ or ‘Alsatian origin,’ differentiating between women’s pre- and post-marital citizenship. In virtually all cases of diverging citizenship status recorded, the wife was

³²⁵ The request form was set up in a less androcentric design than the identification form, asking for the identity card of either ‘husband or wife’ or ‘spouse,’ depending on the print version.

³²⁶ Not only would a French female citizen have become a German citizen upon marrying a German male citizen, and vice versa, but according to the state citizenship regulations in Germany, a female citizen Alsace would for example have taken on her husband’s Prussian state citizenship, and vice versa.

³²⁷ Two married women recorded their husband’s citizenship as different. These were comparatively few, in part because fewer married women filled out these forms and even fewer recorded their husband’s information.

‘Alsatian’ or ‘Alsatian A’ as opposed to her German husband.³²⁸ This shift, separating married couple’s status, was both initiated by the identity cards and a response to them. Firstly, identity cards were given to individuals rather than families or couples – they hence formalised an individual classification. Secondly, those classified as second-class Alsatian or German were eager to highlight their ties to Alsace by underscoring their spouse’s Alsatian origin.

Several men mentioned their wife’s Alsatian origin in their appeal letters. This could range from a short note such as ‘my wife was born (...) to Alsatian parents’³²⁹ or ‘my wife (...) is also descended from a French family’³³⁰ to a more emphatic description of the patriotic contributions of one’s in-laws:

‘My wife (...) is also descended from a French family which has given several soldiers and even officers during the last war.’³³¹

Being married not only to an Alsatian woman but into a French Alsatian family was presented as sign of integration and commitment to Alsace and France. Ironically, even though one’s parents’ intermarriage could cause an ‘inferior’ identity card B, intermarriage to a locally born Alsatian thus became another beneficial factor when negotiating one’s status of belonging. On top of a symbolic commitment, marriage or engagement to a local Alsatian provided practical reasons for wanting a card A. In her appeal letter, Suzanne complained:

‘Wanting to marry a young man native in Lembach (Identity card A) who is employed at the railway service in Merlenbach on Easter, I should go to the place of residence of my future husband several times to look for housing and install my furniture. But only being in the possession of a card B I cannot travel.’³³²

³²⁸ ADBR 414 D 1973-1975.

³²⁹ ‘Ma femme est née (...) de parents alsaciens,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³³⁰ ‘Ma femme (...) descend également d’une famille française,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³³¹ ‘Ma femme (...) descend également d’une famille française qui a donné à la France plusieurs soldats et même des officiers pendant la dernière guerre,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³³² ‘Désirant me marier à Pâques avec un jeune homme natif de Lembach (Carte d’identité A) qui est employé au chemin de fer à Merlenbach, je devrais me rendre à plusieurs reprises au lieu d’habitation de mon futur mari pour y chercher un logement et installer mon mobilier. Mais n’étant qu’en possession d’une carte B je ne puis voyager,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

According to her letter, Suzanne needed a higher identity card to establish a family in Alsace, with an Alsatian husband. This mirrored the plea of an older native Alsatian woman, asking the civil-military administration to reinstate her German-born son-in-law in his job so that he, his wife, and their children were not forced to leave Alsace. The woman declared ‘it is almost unbearable for me to see our family tear up like this and for my daughter to stay in a foreign country.’³³³ The different classification of intermarried couples, which at the very least restricted one’s partners rights and at worst forced the family to leave the region, challenged the principle of family unity, and family unity was evoked by spouses of German origin appealing their second-class categorisation.

Ethnic descent and civic commitment

Because of the higher ratio of Alsatian-born women in intermarriages, women’s origin gained newfound relevance in determining to which degree individuals belonged to Alsace, and thereby France. On the one hand mothers’ local roots were emphasised for ethnic interpretations of Alsatian- and Frenchness, on the other hand marriage to local women was construed as sign of loyalty and integration in the local community. In both cases, women were ascribed an assimilationist influence on their children and husbands.

This conception of national belonging being transmitted through women might be considered an early step towards women’s independent citizenship. It bears striking resemblance to French interwar debates leading up to the abolition of derivative citizenship in 1927 which were fuelled by populationist rather than feminist arguments: ‘If French women were instead permitted to keep their nationality, raise children who were legally French, and employ their particularly feminine influence to assimilate foreign husbands, the national population would be

³³³ ‘C’est presque insupportable pour moi de voir déchirer de cette manière notre famille, et pour ma fille de séjourner dans un pays étranger,’ ADBR 121 AL 906.

substantially augmented.’³³⁴ Camiscioli argues that ‘it was commonly held that French women were responsible for assimilating foreign husbands and half-foreign children.’ She convincingly links this to revolutionary conceptions of gendered social citizenship ‘according to which French women, as “guardians of tradition,” were to execute their civic role from the confines of domestic space.’³³⁵ Even though Vickers and Vouloukos argue that ethnic nation-making especially relied on women as agents of inclusion (in contrast to state-led civic nation-making processes),³³⁶ women’s role as assimilators in fact underscored the gendered entanglement of civic and ethnic nation-building. Brubaker describes the French understanding of nationhood as ‘assimilationist.’³³⁷ However, such assimilation did not happen naturally, but the supposedly civic nation-state France heavily relied on assimilating forces to turn its population into a homogenous community. In Alsace, the removal of ‘German’ individuals (D-cardholders) and the oppression of ethnic minority rights were therefore only one step of constructing such (aspirational) homogeneity and was complemented by the assimilation of husbands and children of French Alsatian women.

Intermarriage was considered a beneficial factor for re-categorisation, interpreted as a sign of commitment to the region. According to Boswell, when evaluating requests for re-classification the responsible triage committees ‘proved more understanding of Germans married to Alsations and *Lorrains*.’³³⁸ During the transition period such practices were not uniform, as Harvey in contrast suggests that ‘Germans who were married to Alsations were also regularly denied revision of their identity cards, as their marriages protected them from deportation and authorized them to apply for naturalization, should they so desire.’³³⁹ Both scholars distinguish

³³⁴ Camiscioli, ‘Intermarriage, Independent Nationality, and the Individual Rights of French Women’, 59.

³³⁵ Camiscioli, ‘Producing Citizens, Reproducing the “French Race”’, 612.

³³⁶ Vickers and Vouloukos, ‘Changing Gender/Nation Relations’, 513, 520.

³³⁷ Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 1.

³³⁸ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 150.

³³⁹ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 550; referring to the Versailles Treaty, Uberfill also argues that being part of a mixed couple could help to stay in Alsace, Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*.

between ‘Germans’ and ‘Alsations’ – a classification that did not formally exist in this form during the transitional period. ‘Germans’ in this case were most likely D- or B-cardholders, ‘Alsations’ were A-cardholders. Favourable consideration of appeal requests as well as the possibility of naturalisation (inscribed in the Treaty of Versailles) framed intermarriage as a step towards legal and/or cultural integration. Discussing whether to dismiss employees of German descent, the director of the Strasbourg tramway system argued that those married to Alsations ‘have taken on an Alsatian mentality ... and their Alsatian families would suffer (if they were expelled).’³⁴⁰ In short, those married to individuals of Alsatian descent should keep their jobs, gain a revised identity card, or be naturalised because firstly, they were assimilated into local society and secondly, the principle of family unity was to be upheld. At least in this case study, such intermarriage was heavily gendered: virtually all spouses of Alsatian descent were women, their lower-classified partners were men.

The interpretations of intermarriage as potential way of including ‘foreign’ men (rather than excluding the mixed family) do not fit an ideal type of civic or ethnic nationhood. Descent and assimilation were intertwined – however they were associated with clearly gendered roles. Local women were construed as biological and cultural reproducers who could assimilate their ‘mixed’ children as well as their ‘foreign’ husbands because of particularly feminine skills.³⁴¹ Vice versa, Vlossak persuasively argues that ‘Alsatian women married to German men who had decided against filing for naturalization were regarded as not worthy of French nationality.’³⁴² Women who had been issued an A card and were re-integrated as French citizens through the peace treaty were thus expatriated again in January 1921 if their foreign husbands had not applied for naturalisation. The importance given to women as cultural reproducers of the nation that bestow national identity on their children and families was not a

³⁴⁰ Quoted in Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 546.

³⁴¹ Also see Camiscioli, ‘Producing Citizens, Reproducing the “French Race”’, 612.

³⁴² Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 217.

novel nationalist trope but is well-established in gender/nation scholarship.³⁴³ However, during the process of reintegrating Alsace into France, this usually cultural, allegedly apolitical role had a direct impact on the legal status of the children and husbands of ‘local’ women.

German men’s marriage to an Alsatian was interpreted as sign of integration (i.e. the result of their wives’ efforts) as well as civic commitment to the region and nation, reversing the understanding of marriage as show of loyalty towards one’s husband and his nation on part of a women. Ethno-cultural origin and civic patriotism were entangled in a highly gendered way: women *passed on* their supposedly French culture, men *decided* to marry local women.

5.3 Men as ‘citizens’: national sentiment

Francophile sentiments

Individuals appealing their identity cards added an extra dimension to national belonging: national sentiments. Being ‘Francophile’ was presented as essential claim to Frenchness, not only adding a layer of (performative) national identification but also dividing the Alsatian population in Francophiles and Germanophiles. Such national sentiments were not only repeatedly declared in appeal letters but also in the reports of the triage committees which noted ‘favourable’ information regarding the candidates’ attitude. Even though being Francophile was not gendered in itself, the notion of being ‘a good citizen’ was associated with men. Considering women were only passive or nominal citizens with severely limited civic rights, as outlined in Chapter 3, the role of an active citizen, involved in public affairs was dominated by men.

In their appeal letters, individuals highlighted their attachment to France, suggesting that Francophile sentiments were more important than potentially non-French origin. These declarations were not necessarily genuine, as there was a utilitarian motivation to offer the

³⁴³ See for example the influential work of Yuval-Davis and Anthias, *Woman-Nation-State*, 7.

committees Francophile narratives. Nevertheless, these appeals shaped constructions of national belonging in Alsace. Regarding separation trials, Boswell convincingly argues that those addressing the committees ‘staked a claim on what constituted Frenchness, and they clearly influenced the *commission de triage*’s deliberations. In the eyes of denouncers, nationality was not just related to ethnicity, but also to national sentiment, public morality, and political behavior.’³⁴⁴ This also applies to the appeal processes for identity cards, where public standing became a gateway to inclusion in the national community. The appeal of Henri summarises this new dimension of belonging:

‘Given my good conduct, my good reputation and my Francophile sentiments, I have the honour to seek from your kindness the identity card requested.’³⁴⁵

Often such national sentiments were framed as a family matter. Maurice points to the ‘the French sentiments of my family being well known’³⁴⁶ and Marguerite claims ‘all members of my family have always expressed good French sentiments.’³⁴⁷ Patriotism was performative: it mattered to have publicly expressed or be known for one’s Francophile feelings, not least because committees valued public opinion. Georges is one of several men declaring ‘We are notoriously known in Wissembourg as good French people and have never hidden our feelings, even in difficult times.’³⁴⁸ In fact, several other appeal letters use the exact same phrasing and are written in the same handwriting and layout, suggesting that some families consulted a lawyer for help. To further stress their good public reputation, applicants attached moral certificates issued by the mayor’s office. Some letters were moreover directly commented on

³⁴⁴ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 157.

³⁴⁵ ‘Vu ma bonne conduite, ma bonne renommée et mes sentiments francophiles, j’ai l’honneur de solliciter de votre bonté la carte d’identité demandée,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁴⁶ ‘Les sentiments bien français de ma famille étant connus,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁴⁷ ‘Tous les membres de ma famille ont toujours témoigné de bons sentiments français,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁴⁸ ‘Nous sommes notoirement connus à Wissembourg comme bons français et nous n’avons jamais caché nos sentiments, même dans les temps difficiles,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

by the mayor, noting for example ‘the father and grandfather of the plaintiff is Alsatian of French origin. The sentiment of the plaintiff has always been French.’³⁴⁹

None of these declarations were limited to men. However, proving one’s French feelings was closely associated with being ‘a good citizen,’ a male-dominated position, considering women’s civic rights were limited. While one applicant promised to ‘always be a loyal citizen,’³⁵⁰ another emphasised his father, who immigrated to Alsace in 1850, ‘had always been a good French citizen.’³⁵¹ Neither of these men related being a good citizen to origin or legal belonging but emphasised the civic aspect of citizenship. This distinction becomes more visible when looking at the French term used by them: *citoyen*. As discussed in Chapter 4, French distinguishes between *nationalité* and *citoyenneté*, the latter referring to civic duties and actions rather than membership in the national community. These two concepts are not merely two interconnected aspects of the English understanding of citizenship but are gendered. Men’s citizenship included being a *citoyen* and getting involved in public, political affairs – women’s citizenship did not.³⁵² Other appellants even more directly referred to civic engagement. Georges for instance argued that

‘The best proof of the authenticity of what I bring forward is that the French administration has not hesitated one second to approve me in my role as Court’s Clerk of the Bailiwick of Wissembourg.’³⁵³

Similarly using his public and professional position as proof of belonging to the local civic community, Frédéric stressed that

³⁴⁹ ‘Le père et grand-père du requérant est Alsacien d’origine française. Le sentiment du requérant était toujours bien français,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁵⁰ ‘je vous assure (...) d’être toujours un citoyen fidèle,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁵¹ ‘il a toujours été bon citoyen français,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁵² Audeval, ‘Une question de catégorie’, 51.

³⁵³ ‘La meilleure preuve de la véracité de ce que j’avance est, que l’Administration française n’a pas hésité un instant à me [consentir] dans mes fonctions de Greffier du Tribunal de Bailliage de Wissembourg,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

‘I have the trust of the entire population, I was elected in the municipal council and I am appointed town councillor for orphans.’³⁵⁴

Employment as a civil servant (one of the first professions where those without card A were dismissed) and holding elected office signified patriotic commitment, but they were positions dominated by men due to women’s lack of active citizenship. The active participation in municipal affairs and good reputation among the local population were brought forward as qualifiers for an identity card A because they demonstrated that the appellants already belonged to the local community – and should therefore be recognised as members of the (new) national community.

Military service

Performative patriotism not only included peacetime civic involvement. Serving in the French army was a common proof of national loyalty, promoted in the appeal letters as well as in contemporary citizenship law. Ironically, most adult men resident in Alsace who served in the First World War had to do so in the German army. Most of them were excluded from the officer corps and sent to the east because the German high command had ‘deem[ed] them too unreliable to fight on the western front.’³⁵⁵ In the early months after the armistice, Alsatian residents who had served in the Germany army were interned by the French regime. Letters written by their Alsatian-born wives asking for their release downplayed the significance of their husbands’ German military service and foregrounded their ties to the Alsatian community. Eugénie for example emphasised that ‘during the war [my husband] has always been considered as Alsatian and in consequence had to suffer the bad treatment of the Alsations’ and listed the names of several ‘Alsatian comrades’ who could serve as witnesses.³⁵⁶ During the

³⁵⁴ ‘Je possède la confiance entière de la population, je suis élu dans le conseil municipal et je suis nommé conseiller communal des orphelins,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁵⁵ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 134; also see Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 538.

³⁵⁶ ‘Pendant la guerre il a toujours été considéré comme alsacien et a en conséquence du subir les mauvais traitements des alsaciens. Comme témoins peuvent figurer ses camarades alsaciens,’ ADBR 121 AL 906.

appeal processes, former German soldiers and their relatives stressed that such service had been compulsory and underlined their Alsatian identity. Jules for instance claimed

‘I have served in the military for 12 years, but only to become a public servant in Alsace, which one could not become without that under the German regime. But also as a soldier I never forgot that I am Alsatian, I never disavowed my native country, as the citizens of our town and all those who know me can confirm.’³⁵⁷

Military service for Germany was hence presented as unwanted necessity which was made up for by emphasising a strong regional identity. In contrast, appellants framed French military service of their relatives as claim to Frenchness. Such service could reach back several decades, as Frédéric noted that ‘my older brother served in the French light cavalry during the war of 1870/71.’³⁵⁸ In even more detail, Marie underscored that

‘my husband (...) has served in the French army for five years, participated in the military campaign of 1870-71, has a military decoration and receives a French military pension.’³⁵⁹

Frédéric and Marie not only highlighted that their relatives had served in the French military, as many other appellants did, but specifically mentioned the Franco-German War of 1870-71, which had resulted in the German annexation of Alsace. Participation in this campaign on the French side fit into the French imaginary of Alsatians as having resisted against the German rule. Ongoing ties with France were underlined by mentioning service during the First World War. Alice (the wife of Jules, who had served in the German army) noted that ‘my brother (...), resident in Bezons (France) was a French soldier during the war of September 1914 until now’³⁶⁰ and Frédéric pointed out that several members of his wife’s family (which was French)

³⁵⁷ ‘Bien que j’ai fait un service militaire de 12 ans, mais seulement pour devenir fonctionnaire en Alsace, ce qu’on ne pouvait pas être sous le régime allemand sans cela. Mais aussi comme soldat je n’ai jamais oublié que je suis Alsacien, je n’ai jamais désavoué mon pays natal, comme les citoyens de notre ville et tous ceux, qui me connaissent, me certifieront cela,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁵⁸ ‘Mon frère aîné a été chasseur à cheval français pendant la guerre de 1870/71,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁵⁹ ‘Mein Mann, Adam Steuer, hat fünf Jahre in der französischen Armee gedient, den Feldzug 1870-71 mitgemacht, besitzt eine Kriegsauszeichnung und bezieht eine franz. Militärrente,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁶⁰ ‘mon frère (...), demeurant à Bezons (France) était soldat français pendant la guerre du septembre 1914 jusqu’à maintenant,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

had served as soldiers ‘and even officers’ during the recent war.³⁶¹ Frédéric’s references to military service for France mark the period of German rule in Alsace and easily fit into a narrative of Francophile Alsace: his brother had served against German invasion, his in-laws for the liberation of Alsace. His own lack of French military service (having been an Alsatian and German citizen for his entire adult life) remains unmentioned.³⁶² The emphasis on relatives’ service for France in direct comparison to one’s own service for Germany appeared at times contradictory. This was particularly striking when Alsatian women asked for the release of their husbands. Rather than not mentioning military service as sign of national allegiance, considering this suspicion was central to her husband’s internment, Marthe for example referred to her grandfather’s function as mayor prior to 1870 as well as her nephew’s service in the French army as proof that she was ‘of a very good French family.’³⁶³

By emphasising their male relatives’ military service petitioners highlighted their ties to France, whether reaching back generations or leading up to the present. This was a gendered link, even when invoked by female appellants, given that military service was a civic duty limited to men, representing a closer tie between ‘active’ male citizens and the nation-state.

Masculine patriotism

Active citizenship in the form of public office or military service was a performance of patriotism and national belonging that was only accessible to men. In the appeal cases, this commitment and access to the national community did not replace descent or intermarriage. Yet, it presented an effective way of convincing the selection committees that one had a claim to an identity card A. According to Harvey, ‘the most decisive factor in convincing the Triage Commissions to grant revisions of status was evidence that the petitioner or a close relative had

³⁶¹ ‘plusieurs soldats et même des officiers,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁶² Frédéric was born in 1858, he was thus still a minor during the war of 1870-71.

³⁶³ ‘Vous voyez par-là, (...) que je suis d’une très bonne famille française,’ ADBR 121 AL 906.

served in the French armed forces or, in the case of German citizens, in the Foreign Legion.’³⁶⁴ This form of claiming belonging was not limited to men. Women such as Elisabeth or Suzanne used their male relatives to promote their own claim to being part of the French national community. However styling men as active citizens who could prove their right to belong through actions (being a good citizen, holding public office, serving in the army) was a profoundly gendered strategy and construction of national belonging. It stood in stark contrast to the representation of women assimilating their relatives as mothers and wives, providing their relatives with a tie to their local community. Similar gendered forms of expressing patriotism for France had already been practiced throughout the period of German rule in Alsace. When describing that parts of the Alsatian bourgeoisie emigrated to France following 1871, Uberfill notes two life events: sons of bourgeois families left Alsace before they were conscripted into the German army, daughters emigrated once their parents had found a husband for them in France.³⁶⁵ These distinctly gendered ways of performing nationalism led to Alsatian women having a more central position in many French wartime narratives of Alsatian Francophilia. Vlossak highlights that ‘the women of Alsace were depicted by the French as protectors of their traditions, resisting Germanization and reproducing French culture. Alsatian men, on the other hand, were encouraged to commit acts that would traditionally have been regarded as unmasculine and cowardly, namely through desertion and the shirking of military responsibilities. Thus Alsatian men did not play the central, or at least traditionally “masculine,” role in this military conflict, at least not in the image of war that the French wished to popularize.’³⁶⁶ In the transitional period of categorisation and negotiation immediately following the war, ‘masculine’ nationalist roles regained importance even though Alsatian men remained in the background. In Chapter 6, I will show in more detail how male family members

³⁶⁴ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 549.

³⁶⁵ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 116.

³⁶⁶ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 206.

and even in-laws stood in as masculine performers of national belonging and thus opened an additional gateway to the national community to both female and male appellants.

6. OVERLAPPING LAYERS OF NATIONAL BELONGING

State authorities and individual residents constructed diverging and overlapping visions of national belonging. Various claims brought forward in appeal processes reflected legalistic criteria, adapted, or challenged them and in turn re-configured national belonging in Alsace, not least because they successfully revised their identity cards. Dominant ideas behind citizenship law (birth, patrilineality, family unity), new rules introduced in Alsace (mothers' origin, equal rules for legitimate and illegitimate children), and narratives advanced by appellants (intermarriage, civic involvement, integration in the local community) created multidimensional conceptions of national belonging.

In this chapter I delineate these overlapping layers, emphasising nested belonging and family ties. In the first section I analyse how Alsatians constructed a plurality of interconnected forms of belonging and stressed their local belonging not in opposition to the nation-state but in order to claim their national belonging. This emphasis on local belonging, captured by the German concept *Heimat*, underscored local women's gendered role as domestic tie to the national community. In the second section I discuss the framing of appeal processes as a family matter, highlighting that national belonging in Alsace was assigned through family ties rather than conceived as individualistic category. In the third section, I summarise how the multiple dimensions of national belonging discussed in this thesis – local roots, family unity, national sentiments – create hierarchical and nested layers of belonging to the national community.

6.1 Local ties: nested belonging

Cross-border migration

The case study of Wissembourg shows that most intermarriages between resident Alsatians and immigrants from other German states in the border district were between Alsatian women and Palatinate men. As opposed to Prussian administrators in Strasbourg, immigrants from

across the border often had a similar dialect, culture, and confession to their Alsatian contemporaries. Moreover, cross-border migration in the region was not only a post-1871 phenomenon. Immigrants who had settled in the region prior to the German annexation and their descendants were categorised differently than those who immigrated after 1870, i.e. who had come for employment or family connections rather than as part of a Germanisation programme. This differentiation translated into the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919. Firstly, descendants of former French citizens (prior to 1871) did not gain French citizenship in 1919 if ‘ascendants in the paternal line include[d] a German who migrated into Alsace-Lorraine after July 15, 1870.’ Secondly, German residents of Alsace-Lorraine who lived there prior to 15 July 1870 or their descendants were eligible for naturalisation.³⁶⁷

Many appeal letters refer to ancestors having moved to Alsace throughout the nineteenth century. The birthplace of both parents was a formal criterion for identity cards and mentioned in virtually all appeal letters. Yet the immigrant status of one’s parent was either glossed over by emphasising the French origin of the other part of the family (see Chapter 5) or justified through underlining the parent had spent the rest of their life in Alsace. Alice, Anne, and Pierre all tell virtually the same story of their fathers’ life:

‘my father immigrated to Alsace as young man in 1857 or 58. He lived and he died in Alsace.’³⁶⁸

‘my father was born in 1820 in Heuchelheim (Palatinate) but immigrated to Alsace in the 40s already, where he married in the year 1848 and where he lived until his death.’³⁶⁹

‘my father (...) came to live in Alsace (...) in 1850. From 1850 to 1870 (6 October 1870, date of his death) he has always been a good French citizen.’³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Treaty of Versailles, section V, annex, paragraph 1, article 2; paragraph 2, article 3.

³⁶⁸ ‘Mon père est immigré dans l’Alsace comme jeune homme en 1857 ou 58. Il a vécu et il est mort en Alsace,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁶⁹ ‘Mein Vater ist im Jahre 1820 in Heuchelheim (Pfalz) geboren aber schon in den 40er Jahren in das Elsass eingewandert, wo er sich im Jahre 1848 verheiratet und bis zu seinem Tode gewohnt hat,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁷⁰ ‘Mon père (...) est venu habiter l’Alsace (...) dans l’année 1850. De 1850 à 1870 (6 Octobre 1870, date de sa mort) il a toujours été bon citoyen français,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

All three suggested that their fathers having spent a considerable amount of their life as well as having died in Alsace had a more important impact on their belonging than their birth in another state. While Anne highlighted her father's marriage as formative experience in the region, others frame their fathers' employment as sign for their integration. According to Claire her father 'soon acquired the sympathies of Mister Vincent (...) who gave him his iron trade business as well as his house.'³⁷¹ Business connections with a local resident could be interpreted as approval of her father's residence in the town, in contrast to the representation of German immigrants in the region as unwanted, foreign administrators. In order to underline their sense of belonging to France – by virtue of not belonging to Germany – children of immigrants emphasised that their parents had not retained close connections to their native regions which they had left at a young age. One candidate's father had 'never returned to Palatinate',³⁷² another petitioner's mother 'did not leave Alsace anymore' after her marriage in 1883.³⁷³

Yet many family trees of Wissembourg residents were entangled with Imperial German states, as repeated cross-border migration reached back several generations. Several appeal letters include detailed accounts of family trees underscoring any Alsatian elements on both their maternal and paternal sides. In the case of Elise, her paternal side of the family as well as her maternal grandmother were born in Alsace whereas her mother and maternal grandfather were born in Palatinate. However, Elise added that the parents of her Palatinate-born grandfather were in fact born in Palatinate and Alsace when both regions had been under French rule.³⁷⁴ In another case, the father of Jacques was born in Palatinate and immigrated to a town in Alsace when he was 14 years old. This was the same town his own father (the grandfather of Jacques)

³⁷¹ 'bientôt il sut acquérir les sympathies de Monsieur (...), qui lui a cédé son commerce de fer, ainsi que sa maison,' ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁷² 'mon père (...) n'est jamais retourné en Palatinat,' ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁷³ 'Depuis lors, elle n'a plus quitté l'Alsace,' ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁷⁴ ADBR 414 D 1974; Palatinate had been annexed by the First French Republic and had remained under Napoleonic rule until the Congress of Vienna 1815.

was born in and had left following the revolution. The appeal letter concluded ‘following this he should be Alsatian and by consequence his son, the father of [Jacques], his great-grandsons and great-granddaughters.’³⁷⁵ Jacques utilised the repeated national disruption in the region, arguing that even if his origin one generation back did not seem French, his extended family tree showed continuous affiliation with France. In Alsace, the national affiliation of inhabitants was at least as likely to be influenced by (re)annexation than by migration. Whereas Elise’s origin of one Alsatian and one Palatine parent was considered ‘mixed’ in 1919 and German in 1913, her great-grandparents native to the same states had both lived under French rule. The French administration attempted to apply a border-related understanding of belonging to these entangled family trees of cross-border communities. This was contested by residents of Wissembourg who highlighted their continuous presence in the region and their integration in the local community.

Local integration and ‘Heimat’

In the appeal processes, Alsatian petitioners connected local and national ideas of belonging, stressing their regional belonging not in opposition to the nation-state but in order to claim their national belonging. To contest their B-classification due to ‘mixed’ origin, petitioners argued that regardless of one of their parent’s place of birth, they were properly integrated in the local Alsatian community and identified themselves as Alsatian. Their sense of belonging to their town, and by extension Alsace and France more broadly, can be captured by the German concept of *Heimat*, which does not strictly distinguish between national and regional belonging. The term *Heimat*, in English translated as ‘home’ or ‘homeland,’ refers to various forms of belonging that do not necessarily have national(ist) connotations. *Heimat* simultaneously refers to geographical spaces (e.g. one’s home country or hometown) and to

³⁷⁵ ‘D’après cela il devrait être alsacien par conséquent aussi son fils, le père de (...), ses arrière petits fils et arrière petites filles,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

certain qualities of that space (e.g. dialect, cuisine, culture). According to Alon Confino, in the German Empire *Heimat* ‘embodied the nation in the locality, enabling citizens to reconcile diverse local and regional loyalties with a larger ideal of German national unity.’³⁷⁶

Heimat may be one’s place of birth, but more importance is given to the lived experience of growing up and continued residence than to the event of birth. For instance, in his appeal letter Paul related *Heimat* to having built a livelihood, outlining his future prospects: ‘Here in Lauterburg I have my *Heimat*, purchased fields and cattle and want to acquire the French citizenship.’³⁷⁷ The account of Anne was in contrast more oriented towards her past than her future:

‘my father was born in 1820 in Heuchelheim (Palatinate) but immigrated to Alsace in the 40s already, where he married in the year 1848 and lived until his death. My mother is an Old-Alsatian. I therefore consider Alsace to be my *Heimat*.’³⁷⁸

Raising the issues of immigration and intermarriage, Anne did not merely suggest that she is Alsatian due to her mother’s origin but connected this to her father having spent his entire adult life in Alsace. This notion of belonging to Alsace drew on a combination of factors: birth, marriage, and long-term residence in a location could all contribute to making Alsace their ‘home.’ Requesting the release of her German-origin son-in-law who was interned after the armistice, Yvonne for instance vehemently declared that

‘Alsace is the native country of my son-in-law; he has always lived here; he speaks our dialect and he thinks like us (...) he enjoyed the sympathies of the population’³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Paraphrased by Zahra, ‘Imagined Noncommunities’, 95.

³⁷⁷ ‘Hier in Lauterburg habe ich meine Heimat, habe mir eigenen Feldbau und Vieh angeschafft und will mir die französische Staatsangehörigkeit erwerben,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁷⁸ ‘Mein Vater ist im Jahre 1820 in Heuchelheim (Pfalz) geboren aber schon in den 40er Jahren in das Elsass eingewandert, wo er sich im Jahre 1848 verheiratet und bis zu seinem Tode gewohnt hat. Meine Mutter ist Altelsässerin. Ich sehe daher das Elsass als meine Heimat an,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁷⁹ ‘L’Alsace est le pays natal de mon gendre, il l’a toujours habité ; il parle notre dialecte et il pense comme nous (...) il jouit les sympathies de la population,’ ADBR 121 Al 906.

Yvonne emphasised the commonalities between her son-in-law and his Alsatian contemporaries, which demonstrated his integration in the local community. In another case, Jeanne was born in an Alsatian village near Wissembourg where she lived her entire life. Yet after the war she received an identity card B because her father was born in a village around 30km further away – just across the border to Palatinate. Jeanne, who was widowed and whose 17-year-old daughter had received a D card, was keen to emphasise her multitude of ties to her home region:

‘Considering that I have always lived in Alsace; that my late husband who I married on 24 October 1900 came to Weiler at the age of two and always lived in Alsace; that my maternal grandparents are also from Weiler (village nearby the border) and have always lived there, I would be very grateful if you could grant me card A. I am a poor widow without resources. (...) my future and that of my daughter is heavily compromised by this.’³⁸⁰

Taking the precarious situation of appellants such as Jeanne into account, listing as many qualifiers for belonging as possible was certainly a strategy of negotiation, attempting to provide the separation committees with as many reasons for revising an identity card as possible. At the same time, these appeals suggest that local factors had a more formative impact on individuals’ sense of belonging in this region than the notion of state borders. Alsatian residents therefore co-opted ties to the local community to claim their place in the new national community.

The interlocking layers of local integration and national belonging reinforced gendered roles within nation-building discourses. The idea of *Heimat* was associated with a nurturing space where the petitioners grew up and raised. In their appeal letters, they implicitly and explicitly linked this notion to women’s assimilationist responsibility as wives and mothers. The initial

³⁸⁰ ‘En considération de ce que j’ai toujours habité l’Alsace ; que feu mon mari, que j’avais épousé le 24 octobre 1900 est venu à Weiler à l’âge de deux ans et a toujours vécu en Alsace ; que mes grands-parents maternels sont également de Weiler (village tout près de la frontière) et y ont toujours séjourné, je vous serais très reconnaissante si vouliez bien m’accorder la carte A. Je suis une pauvre veuve sans ressources. (...) mon avenir ainsi que celui de ma fille est par là bien compromis,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

descent-based categorisation of the population which promoted an ethnic, layered understanding of ‘Frenchness’ was challenged by residents who highlighted their gendered ties to the local community. ‘Local’ women (i.e. of Alsatian origin) were assigned the supposedly domestic role of providing a tie to the community’s values and culture. In contrast, men performed their role as community members through employment and public services, ranging from being employees of the railway service to becoming business partners to holding elected office. Ironically, men were therefore framed as more easily assimilable than women. Rather than women changing their national allegiance because of loyalty to their husband (a supposedly ‘civic’ decision of marrying a foreigner), men supposedly changed their national allegiance because of their wife’s influence on their culture and values.

The construction of women’s role as cultural transmitters, discussed in Chapter 5, was also linked to a specific space: the local. Considering the importance given to ‘local women’ by petitioners and approving triage committees in the appeal processes, I argue that national-building projects were localised in highly gendered ways. This claim builds on Carla Freeman’s argument that conceptualisations of globalisation have reproduced a dichotomous model which ‘has depicted women and femininity as rooted, traditional, and charged with maintaining domestic continuity in the face of flux and instability by global movements that, explicitly or not, embody a quality of masculinity.’³⁸¹ Adapting the transnational women’s history approach of Midgley, Twells, and Carlier I suggest that examining ‘how globe-making or world-making projects were anchored in specific localities’ and exploring ‘the role of local agency in the construction of these multiple globalisations or worlds’³⁸² provides an insightful perspective for further analyses of nation-building projects.

³⁸¹ Freeman, ‘Is Local: Global as Feminine: Masculine’, 1017.

³⁸² Midgley, Twells, and Carlier, *Women in Transnational History*, 4.

Alsatian Francophilia

In their appeal letters, petitioners extended beyond the supposedly objective criteria for issuing identity cards and invoked national sentiments, feelings, and values. These arguments were firmly connected to notions of growing up in Alsace and among other (potentially A-classified) Alsatians. The petitioners hence framed harbouring Francophile sentiments or feeling Alsatian as essential part of their integration in the local community. For instance, the siblings Jean, Maria, Robert, and Lucie declared ‘we have been brought up with exclusively French feelings and we are irascible anti-Germans.’³⁸³ Along with a broader conception of *Heimat*, nations are often constructed as spaces to be protected from external threats and outsiders. In post-war Alsace, French administrators construed Germanophile sentiments and individuals in Alsace as such threats to the nation – or rather to the Frenchification project in Alsace. This emphasis on national sentiments was reflected in the appeal processes. Whereas the identity cards were initially distributed according to descent, both appellants and the approving triage committees associated national belonging with Francophile sentiments. Arguments regarding Alsatian women’s role as biological and cultural reproducers were hence quickly linked to discourses of loyalty to the French nation-state: the emphasis was not merely on having been raised by an Alsatian mother but also having been raised with certain Francophile values.

The different classification of the Alsatian population was contested in various appeal letters, when appellants shifted the focus to their integration in the local community and their alleged French and/or Alsatian mentality. Alice, whose father had immigrated to Alsace, emphatically declared:

‘I am born in Alsace, I know nothing apart from Alsace and France. If I was entirely of French origin, I could not feel any different than how I have always felt. When a man has lived in a country as long as my father (...) and when he possessed the trust of natives like himself, then one can no longer

³⁸³ ‘nous avons été élevés dans les sentiments exclusivement français et nous sommes des anti-allemands irascibles,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

say he was a foreigner. And his children dare to call themselves true Alsatians on their own right.’³⁸⁴

Alice thereby explicitly questioned the administrative distinction between ‘national’ and ‘foreigner.’ Instead of presenting her (or her parents’) birth in Alsace as sole qualifier, she stressed how being born and especially having lived in Alsace her entire life affected the way she felt. Alice and Jeanne moreover both critically highlight their sense of exclusion from a group of peers they (and their children) have grown up with. According to Alice ‘it is not pleasant for an Alsatian by sentiment to be differentiated from others.’³⁸⁵ Jeanne even more drastically claimed:

‘[my daughter] has been raised entirely in Alsace, and in midst of all her relatives in Weiler who possess the card A, she feels humiliated, despised and unhappy without her having anything to do with it.’³⁸⁶

Both women compare themselves and their children, respectively, with other Alsatians and relatives with whom they share extensive experiences but who have been put into a different, more advantageous, category than themselves, due to their parents’ birthplace. Several male appellants also underscored their emotional attachment to France, yet they more commonly framed it as patriotic commitment. Georges for instance declared ‘we are notoriously known in Wissembourg as good French people and have never hidden our feelings, even in difficult times,’³⁸⁷ thus underlining the notion of unconditional attachment to the French nation, and potential sacrifice and suffering. Léon even more explicitly requested an identity card A ‘given my filial love for France and my patriotic sentiments.’³⁸⁸ In the letters of Alice, Jeanne,

³⁸⁴ ‘Moi je suis née en Alsace, je ne connais rien que l’Alsace et la France. Si j’étais tout à fait origine française, je ne pourrais pas sentir autrement comme j’ai toujours senti. Quand un homme avait vécu si longtemps dans un pays comme mon père (...) et quand il avait possédé la confiance des indigènes comme lui, alors on ne peut plus dire qu’il était étranger. Et ses enfants s’osent nommer des vrais Alsaciens de plein droit,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁸⁵ ‘ce n’est pas agréable pour une Alsacienne par sens d’être différée contre les autres,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁸⁶ ‘[ma fille] a été complètement élevée en Alsace, et au milieu de tous ses parents à Weiler qui possèdent la carte A, elle se sent humiliée, méprisée et malheureuse sans qu’elle y soit pour quelque chose,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁸⁷ ‘Nous sommes notoirement connus à Wissembourg comme bons français et nous n’avons jamais caché nos sentiments, même dans les temps difficiles,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁸⁸ ‘Vu mon amour filial pour la France et mes sentiments patriotiques,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

Georges, and Léon feelings and sentiments take priority over legalistic classification criteria. However, their expressions of national sentiments seem to follow a gendered pattern: while women underlined their *feelings* of exclusion, men emphasised their patriotic *sentiments*. A more extensive future comparative analysis of appeal letters written by women and men could expand on this hypothesis of gendered emotionalised appeals.

Shared values by virtue of having been raised and living within the same community were fundamental to appeals of B-categorised Alsatians. The equation of an Alsatian mentality and national or Francophile sentiments in the appeal documents built on and promoted the narrative of Alsace being inherently pro-French, at central narrative in the French nationalist image of the patriotic ‘lost provinces,’ discussed in Chapter 3. Whether intentional or not, petitioners’ argument that they were ‘Alsatian and by implication French’³⁸⁹ reflected the late nineteenth-century French nationalist idea that the local population of Alsace was inherently French due to their patriotic, civic attachment to the French nation. The link between Alsatian and French belonging thus constructed a sense of nested belonging which was at odds with assimilationist conceptions of Frenchness, but simultaneously complied to dominant French narratives of why Alsace ought to be a French region.

The language of patriotism and Francophilia was a crucial negotiating tool given the French image of Alsace as pro-French region whose inhabitants had been eager to be returned to their ‘motherland.’ Many petitioners further complied to this narrative by writing their appeal letters in French. Only one quarter of the appeal letters were written in German, even though in the 1910 census around 87 percent of the population had registered German or a German dialect as their native language.³⁹⁰ Throughout the period of German rule, the use of the French language had been a sign of ‘national loyalty,’ as the strongly Francophile bourgeoisie spoke

³⁸⁹ ‘[toute ma famille] est alsacienne et par conséquent française,’ ADBR 121 AL 906.

³⁹⁰ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 131.

French and only addressed their employees in the Alsatian dialect.³⁹¹ As outlined in Chapter 5, many young women (or their fathers) stressed their need for a card A and the extended travel rights attached to it in order to travel to interior France and improve their French – this was both a practical concern to increase employment or marriage chances and a show of commitment to the French nation.

The widespread use of German and/or the Alsatian dialect in Alsace was a problematic issue in intellectual conceptions of Alsace as French. Vlossak explains that ‘in theory the French nation was a “daily plebiscite,” but this would mean nothing to a young French soldier confronted with German-speaking Alsatians in 1918. German was the language of the enemy (...).’³⁹² Following the re-annexation of Alsace, Frenchification measures included national assimilation through teaching the French language, both to children and adult Alsatians.³⁹³ However at least in the early months of the transitional period, being a German speaker (or rather performing as German speaker) was not considered a disqualifier for national belonging, as the successful appeals accompanied by German appeal letters show. Many of the appeal documents in fact reflected bilingual practices in Alsace. This ranged from linguistic-conceptual transfers when declaring Alsatian as citizenship (discussed in Chapter 5) to bilingual appeal letters. Bilingual elements of the documents expressed both practical concerns and adaptation to the new regime. For instance, several of the letters written in German stated the date, salutation, and subject line in French – most likely to increase the chances of the letter reaching the correct destination and being processed by Francophone administrators. Other German letters were accompanied by supportive comments by the mayor of Wissembourg (or other local mayors of villages in the district of Wissembourg) that were written in French. Moreover, many petitioners switched between French and German spellings of Alsatian towns

³⁹¹ Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne (1871-1924)*, 117.

³⁹² Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 172.

³⁹³ Vlossak, 175–78.

and villages. The latter practice hinted at the gradual adaptation to nationalisation measures: after 1871, Germanisation included the renaming of towns and streets, and similar processes ensued after 1918 in French.³⁹⁴ Even more strikingly, many petitioners switched between Frenchified and Germanised versions of their own names. The change from Katharina to Catherine, Johann to Jean, etc., may have been a concession to the new French regime, however the names of the petitioners' parents also suggest that first names commonly switched between the German and French versions depending on the date of birth (and the ruling state at the time). Jakob for instance was born in 1879, his father Jacques in 1848; Jakob moreover switches between signing his letter with his German name but registering as Jacques in his identification form.³⁹⁵

On the one hand, appeal requests written in French and Frenchified names demonstrate the efforts of Alsatians to show their Francophile sentiments and attachment to France. On the other hand, the persistent parallel use of French *and* German spellings, the not insignificant number of letters written in German, and arguments that speaking the Alsatian dialect was a sign of local integration and hence national belonging suggest that transnational practices and bilingualism were not necessarily perceived as un-French.

6.2 Family ties: belonging through relatives

Family appeals

From December 1918 on, identity cards were distributed to individuals, meaning that members of a family could receive different cards. They thus disrupted the principle of family unity, which had stated that direct family members should carry the same citizenship. However, by assigning identity cards based on descent, French administrators continued to situate individual residents of Alsace within their family context. Consequently, appeal documents required the

³⁹⁴ Vlossak, 6–7.

³⁹⁵ ADBR 414 D 1974.

personal details of parents, spouses or children and hence at least indirectly involved several family members; moreover, siblings repeatedly filed shared appeal requests. Administrators thus foregrounded the role of descent which was inextricably entangled with family. However, many petitioners further expanded on the narrative of being part of a family unit by presenting their relatives as appeal sponsors who had proven the family's national allegiance through their civic actions or local roots.

Administrative forms issued to those appealing their identity card asked for place and date of birth of the petitioner's parents and the identity card type assigned to their spouse, if applicable. In the appeal letters, appellants offered further detail on their parents' biographies as well as their spouses' background – where they were born, why and when they moved to Alsace, when they married, when they died, who they were related to; moreover, they attached birth and marriage certificates for further proof. This information was again picked up in the triage committee's observations regarding the approval of the request. The identity cards appeal process thus drew on the primary gateway to national belonging through family ties (i.e. the descent principle in both French and German citizenship regulations) and further extended it, using personal backstories to persuade the triage committees.

On top of framing individual petitioners as family members rather than as independent members of the national community, many appeals were made on behalf of several family members. Most commonly siblings submitted a shared application (or their A-card parent did so), in one case a mother with a B-card also asked to revise her minor child's D-card. Especially minors (above the age of 15) did not write their own appeal letters but a parent or brother wrote on their behalf. Even most adults referred to their parents, grandparents, or most extend relatives' (ethnic) origin or (supposedly civic) actions, presenting them as guarantors for their own right to belong to the national community.

Both legalistic constructions of citizenship or identity cards and appeal letters underscored the importance of family. Membership in the national community was gained by virtue of being born into a certain (legitimate) family. One could claim such national belonging through meeting supposedly objective criteria, such as birthplace or citizenship status of one's parents, as well as through painting a convincing picture of being related to 'good citizens' and locally long-established families. In contrast to an individualistic, voluntarist approach to national belonging (e.g. having the right to an identity card A because of one's own Francophile sentiments and community involvement), most appeal cases promoted an adapted principle of family unity. Women and men alike presented themselves as members of the national community because they were related to other members of that community. Importantly, men too framed themselves as family members rather than as independent heads of the family.

Gendered contributions

Female and male appellants could claim their place in the national community (of A-cardholders) not only by performing certain gendered nationalist duties themselves but by proxy. Being related to 'a good French citizen' or 'an Old-Alsatian woman' was presented as qualifiers for revising one's identity card, which led to an entanglement of origin and patriotism.

The origin of direct ancestors was the main criterion in the initial identity card order, determining who was put into which category. In response, appellants foregrounded the French Alsatian side of their family – often their maternal side. Female relatives were therefore virtually always presented in their role of mothers, grandmothers, or wives:

'My mother is Alsatian (French) like her parents and her ancestors who immigrated in the said town in the middle of the fifteenth century.'³⁹⁶

³⁹⁶ 'Ma mère est Alsacienne (Française) comme ses parents et ses aïeux qui sont immigrés dans ladite ville dans le milieu du quinzième siècle,' ADBR 414 D 1974.

‘my mother (...) is of absolutely French origin and is descended from one of the oldest French families in Wissembourg’³⁹⁷

‘My wife (...) is also descended from a French family.’³⁹⁸

‘my wife is Alsatian.’³⁹⁹

In contrast, male relatives were most commonly mentioned in connection to their French military service:

‘Our paternal grandfather and our father had the honour of serving under the French flag, the first served in the 27th Regiment of the infantry and the second has served for seven years in the 1st Regiment of the Zouaves’⁴⁰⁰

‘My father as well as my grandfather had the honour of serving under the French flag; the first served in the light cavalry, the second in the light infantry.’⁴⁰¹

‘my husband (...) has served in the French army for five years, participated in the military campaign of 1870-71, has a military decoration and receives French military pension.’⁴⁰²

Intermarriage to an Alsatian woman and service in the French military were two of the most effective means of demonstrating one’s ties to the national community and thereby being successful in requesting a different identity card.⁴⁰³ These two types of access to national belonging were inherently gendered, framing women as cultural transmitters and men as civic performers, as discussed in Chapter 5. However, the appeal strategy of claiming belonging by virtue of family association rendered both gateways accessible to female and male appellants who otherwise would have struggled to fulfil their specific gender requirements. For example, women of ‘mixed origin’ who appealed their card B were unable to directly claim the feminised

³⁹⁷ ‘Ma mère (...) est d’origine absolument française et est issue d’une des plus anciennes familles françaises de Wissembourg,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁹⁸ ‘Ma femme (...) descend également d’une famille française,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

³⁹⁹ ‘ma femme est Alsacienne,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

⁴⁰⁰ ‘Notre grand-père du côté paternel et notre père ont eu l’honneur de servir sous les drapeaux français, le premier a fait son service au 27^e Régiment d’infanterie et le second a fait sept ans de service au 1^{er} Régiment de Zouaves,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

⁴⁰¹ ‘Mon père ainsi que mon grand-père ont eu l’honneur de servir sous les drapeaux français ; le premier a fait son service dans les Chasseurs à cheval, et le second dans les chasseurs à pied,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

⁴⁰² ‘Mein Mann, Adam Steuer, hat fünf Jahre in der französischen Armee gedient, den Feldzug 1870-71 mitgemacht, besitzt eine Kriegsauszeichnung und bezieht eine franz. Militärrente,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

⁴⁰³ Harvey, ‘Lost Children or Enemy Aliens?’, 549; Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 150.

role of transmitters of national culture and Frenchness to their husbands and children – they either relied on women in the previous generation to have fulfilled that role or referred to male relatives' contributions. In similar vein, while a few men emphasised their own public service in the local community, they had been German citizens for the previous five decades and were usually too young to have served in the French army prior to 1871. The generation of Alsatian men which appealed their identity cards was therefore much more likely to have served in the German military. This service 'on the wrong side' was either glossed over or dismissed as a compulsory, unwanted experience that was symbolic of the German oppression of Alsace rather than any patriotic contribution to Germany. Male ancestors, relatives, and even in-laws therefore stood in as guarantors of the family's French patriotism as contemporary Alsatians were unable to perform this essential civic and nationalist duty.

The dimensions of origin, intermarriage, and military service converged when men highlighted the French military service of their in-laws. Male petitioners such as Frédéric suggested they belonged to the national community not only because of their wife's French Alsatian origin (and thereby their integration through assimilation) but also because of the actions of her male relatives:

‘My wife (...) also comes from a French family which has given several soldiers and even officers during the last war.’⁴⁰⁴

The already above-cited reference of Frédéric to his in-laws can be re-read from multiple perspectives: firstly, he emphasises the French origin of his wife, secondly he suggests that by being married to a woman of such origin also qualifies him for an A card, and thirdly, the patriotic actions and sacrifices of his male in-laws further demonstrate the entire family's allegiance to France. In this scenario, women were both foregrounded as transmitters of

⁴⁰⁴ ‘Ma femme (...) descend également d’une famille française qui a donné à la France plusieurs soldats et même des officiers pendant la dernière guerre,’ ADBR 414 D 1974.

Frenchness (and therefore the link between their family members and the French nation) and as relatives of male citizens (who earned the family's place in the nation-state by fulfilling their civic duties). The sponsoring role of family members was thus highly gendered. Whereas petitioners constructed women as ethnic transmitters within the family, men were presented as civic performers outside the family sphere. However, these gendered roles did not result in a clear civic-ethnic or public-private dichotomy. In either case, appellants claimed their place in the national community through family connections, marking them as family members rather than individuals. Simultaneously, citing one's marriage to a French Alsatian woman along with her male relatives' military service entangled 'feminine' and 'masculine' duties in the nation: biological and cultural reproduction on the one hand, and public performance of loyalty to the nation-state on the other.

Limitation or opportunity

The identity card system challenged the transnational practices of intermarried families by constructing differing levels of belonging to France and highlighting those deviating from an ideal Frenchness. Category B specifically targeted children of intermarried couples, restricting their rights and marking them as potentially German (and correspondingly suspicious) elements. This categorisation was met with outrage by self-proclaimed Francophiles with immigrant roots, resulting in a high number of appeals. The initial classification process particularly limited the rights and public standing of 'mixed' families with Alsatian-born husbands or fathers, i.e. cases that would have been classified as fully Alsatian (and presumably French, by virtue of the integration of Alsace into France) according to pre-war patrilineal citizenship regulations.

However, the possibility of appealing along with clauses regarding descendants and spouses of reintegrated French citizens opened opportunities for those individuals who would not have been considered as French in a patrilineal system. Legitimate children of Old German fathers

were able to claim an A card by emphasising their maternal family's local roots. Illegitimate children also benefitted from the new regulations as they were able to claim a more advantageous identity card if their biological mother and father were Alsatian, explicitly dismissing the legal status acquired through adoptive fathers. Moreover, B-classified men married to women with an A card had higher chances of getting their identity card revised and the Treaty of Versailles gave male German citizens married to reintegrated French citizens the opportunity for naturalisation.

This reversal of the principles of marital expatriation and marital naturalisation, previously only applicable to women, operated in favour of local Alsatian women and their Old German immigrant husbands if the couple intended to stay in the region. Women's supposed assimilationist influence offered couples the opportunity to become French citizens who according to pre-war citizenship regulations both would have been firmly categorised as (non-Alsatian) German citizens. The ethnicization of 'local women' temporarily trumped ideas of patriarchal family unity. At a moment of national disruption which threatened many locally born women to be expelled from their long-established home region, it allowed married Alsatian women to remain part of their native community rather than being categorised according to their 'foreign' husband's citizenship. Furthermore, men who previously had little claim to French belonging and whose naturalisation options were based on individualistic achievements (e.g. long-term residence or French military service) gained a comparatively easier option of national integration through their family ties to an Alsatian woman. Of course, this was a conditional and temporary opportunity – as I have pointed out in Chapter 5, naturalisation for spouses of reintegrated citizens was only possible until January 1921 and upon men's failure to apply for naturalisation their wives who were newly reinstated French citizens lost that citizenship.

6.3 Overlapping claims to Frenchness

Individual belonging and family unity

The distribution of identity cards created formal layers of national belonging and questioned whether anyone without an A-card was to be a full member of the new national community. Mirroring citizenship as a tie between individuals and the state, identity cards were officially issued to individuals rather than family units. Given the descent-based classification, this meant that members of the same family were commonly divided into separate categories, holding different rights. Restrictions such as limited travel rights and employment opportunities which concerned B- and D-cardholders thus also affected A-classified direct relatives. While A-cardholders were not forcibly expelled (and even D-cardholders were not necessarily subject to expulsions), limited possibilities to secure a livelihood in the region posed a threat to the entire family. In their appeals, Alsations used the concept of family unity, which dominated citizenship discourses in France and internationally, to argue for re-classification based on their family ties. My analysis confirms Zahra's observation that 'the national disaggregation of families provoked noisy complaints from the Alsatian population. In letters of protest, Alsations repeatedly depicted their families as organic national units in order to claim an identity (and an identity card) as a French-Alsatian.'⁴⁰⁵ The distribution and appeal of identity cards thus created a second type of layer, constructing national belonging both as individualistic and as family category.

As argued in Chapter 5, arguments for re-classification that highlighted marriage to local women as a sign of integration and a claim to national belonging mirrored the legal practice of marital naturalisation, with seemingly reversed gender roles (i.e. husbands' instead of wives' naturalisation). Similarly, mothers' native origin affected their children's identity card instead of being disregarded in favour of fathers' legal status. Men's role in determining their

⁴⁰⁵ Zahra, 'The "Minority Problem" and National Classification', 155.

dependents national status was thus challenged, firstly by husbands' appeal pleas, and secondly by the ethnic descent-based identity card order which disrupted patrilineal citizenship regulations.

However, this (temporary) challenge to the *pater familias* was only partial. The marital naturalisation of husbands did not reverse gendered roles within the nation. While women's change of citizenship upon marriage was justified by her alleged political and civic dependence on her husband, men's marriage to local Alsatian women (and subsequent desire to stay in Alsace) was presented as independent, civic choice. Moreover, women whose husbands were classified as German invoked their status as dependents and 'depicted their husbands' classification as Germans as a threat to their economic livelihood and that of their (loyally) French children.'⁴⁰⁶ The possibility for lower-classified husbands to gain the same identity card (and citizenship through the Treaty of Versailles) as their wives hence relied on men's role as independent head of the household. In contrast, local women were presented as cultural and national 'assimilators' who nonetheless politically and economically depended on their German-born husbands. Appellants and approving triage committees thus used and accepted existing gender roles within the nation, even if the formal procedure broke with patrilineal citizenship regulations.

Origin and patriotism

The descent-based classification enforced by the French administration signified a shift of conceptions of French nationhood and at the same time reflected already existing colonial practices. The categorisation of the Alsatian population according to origin through both the identity cards and the peace treaty constructed an 'ethnic' vision of belonging – being part of the French nation-state was primarily understood inherited right rather than a political choice.

⁴⁰⁶ Zahra, 155.

However, the possibility of appealing identity cards as well as applying for naturalisation added a ‘civic’ component, giving individuals the opportunity to change their national status. The combination of descent-based categorisation and appeals created a multidimensional understanding of national belonging, linking elements of both the ‘civic’ and the ‘ethnic’ ideal types of nationhood. Belonging to Alsace and France could be claimed through a plurality of means – common options included emphasising the local origin of one’s mother and/or wife and the military service of male relatives and/or in-laws.

The descent-based initial classification and the subsequent appeals underscore two different approaches to national ambiguity in the Alsatian borderland. On the one hand, the identity cards had been designed to identify (and eliminate) any ‘German’ elements and ensure Frenchification. On the other hand, B-classified Alsations especially emphasised their strong Francophile sentiments that complied with dominant French nationalist narratives prior to 1918: that Alsace was at heart a French region despite any Germanic cultural and linguistic roots. The latter approach suggested that in a region characterised by its place as mediator in between France and Germany patriotic sentiments were a stronger indication of national allegiance to the nation(-state) than (mixed) origin.

Origin and patriotism were both coexisting and competing layers of national belonging. The clash between the two is highlighted by Boswell who argues ‘some of the most patriotic, Francophile Alsations had German blood in their veins, and they reacted with predictable outrage at their second-rate classification.’⁴⁰⁷ While I would critically re-think his melodramatic use of ‘German blood,’ Boswell aptly captures the discontent among Alsations who had celebrated the return of French rule and found themselves suspected of being foreigners. People’s ‘outrage’ and subsequent appeals may not have been inspired by fervent

⁴⁰⁷ Boswell, ‘From Liberation to Purge Trials in the “Mythic Provinces”’, 142–43.

nationalism but more practical, utilitarian, and selfish motivations, such as desiring better access to employment and freedom of movement. However, they constructed and vocally proposed an alternative understanding of national and local belonging (and in consequence entitlement to certain rights) in order to achieve this higher status.

Patriotic sentiment and actions overlapped with French origin in many petitioners' arguments because they were related to different family members. The dichotomisation of gender roles in nations is summarised by Vlossak: 'Men, as soldiers and citizens, were expected to embody the nation by exhibiting the qualities of strength, discipline, order, and progress. (...) As mothers and wives, women were expected to be passive, submissive, and nurturing, as well as to provide a link to traditions and the past.'⁴⁰⁸ Female and male appellants alike drew on both these roles simultaneously by using family members as representatives and guarantors of their own claim to national belonging. The appeal strategy of listing as many reasons for re-classification as possible thus led to an overlap of arguments related to ethnic origin on the one hand, and to civic involvement on the other. Connecting a gender perspective to civic/ethnic theories, as suggested by Vickers and Vouloukos, reveals that even when these gender roles overlap – e.g. when a female appellant referred both to her mother's Alsatian origin and her brother's French military service – civic and ethnic elements of national belonging were coded as masculine and feminine.

Localised and nested belonging

Through nested belonging, Alsations localised the meaning of national belonging in their own nationally disrupted, ambiguous context. Local roots served as a more continuous framework of belonging in comparison to repeated changes of national affiliation of Alsace (as well as the neighbouring Palatinate). In response to their national status being contested by the new French

⁴⁰⁸ Vlossak, *Marianne or Germania?*, 27.

administration, Alsations drew heavily on their local integration and reputation. When arguing they had a claim to identity card A and were in fact no different to French-Alsations by descent, petitioners proposed their belonging to the local community around Wissembourg was synonymous to their belonging to Alsace which correspondingly demonstrated their belonging to the French national community. They therefore constructed nested layers of belonging, ranging from their tangible surroundings to the abstract nation-state.

The appeal processes further localised the state-initiated categorisation of the Alsatian population. Triage committees deciding whether to approve or reject appeal request operated in distinct districts, rather than as centralised body in Strasbourg. Even though the committee was predominantly made up of military members and Alsatian revenants (i.e. not local community members), the delegation of decision-making power to separate committees and lack of clear guidelines allowed room for interpretation regarding who should be re-classified. Supportive notes from the local mayor, advocating for some appellants, further demonstrate the entanglement of local and national or ‘official’ – the mayor was commonly both a member of the community on-site but as civil servant also a representative of the (new) national community and administration.

Localised conceptions of Frenchness clashed with assimilationist, uniform ideals of the French government. The lack of recognition for nested community ties may have been one of the reasons why nationalising programmes of the French state that suppressed regional identities were to meet resistance in Alsace in the interwar period. Carrol suggests that encounters with French people from the ‘interior’ of France reinforced a sense of Alsatian distinctiveness. As a consequence, ‘Alsations who had accepted or even celebrated the return to French rule became increasingly frustrated at the lack of space for regional particularities within the hegemonic

notions of Frenchness that they encountered after 1918.’⁴⁰⁹ Constructions of national belonging by Alsatian individuals relied on interlocking, nested layers – yet this vision of Frenchness was not accessible to everyone within the national community and appeared as national ambiguity or regionalism to some. Ultimately, the process of re-imagining the national community did not create national unity but also involved an Othering process when competing and contradictory visions of Frenchness clashed with each other.

⁴⁰⁹ Carrol, *The Return of Alsace to France*, 202–3.

CONCLUSION

The process of distributing and contesting formal categories of national belonging in Alsace shows that national community and its characteristics were dynamic and multidimensional concepts. To be (seen as) French, Alsatian, or German was not only an abstract question of intellectual or legal debate but had an immediate impact on the lived realities of the population of Alsace. At the same time, belonging did not mean the same for everyone: access to national membership and the consequences of such membership (or lack thereof) in the national community were context specific. In this thesis I have shown that multiple layers lie below the surface of the seemingly uniform categories of citizenship or nationality. These gendered layers were overlapping, nested, and hierarchical. Overlapping because there were various points of access to national belonging for any individual – origin, marriage, national sentiments, and patriotic actions. Nested because notions of local integration and national membership were framed as interdependent. Hierarchical because not every individual had the same opportunities to belong to the nation, nor the same rights within that community.

In order to capture these multiple layers of national belonging, I chose a multi-perspective approach. I considered two national legal systems and the temporary legal system of the identity cards, and my analysis builds on a combination of feminist and transnational concepts and scholarly debate within nationalism and borderland studies. This approach brings various methodological challenges, ranging from varying degrees of familiarity with the different legal systems and strands of scholarship, to issues of translation, to the difficulty of not perpetuating the national categorisations I examine.

Unequal access to and rights within the national community were formalised by the French civil-military administration when issuing layered identity cards ranging from A to D. Similar to other forms of legal pluralism in the French imperial system, these hierarchical layers had the purpose of determining who was ‘more’ French than others and to uphold the privileges

and rights of that group. Moreover, the identity cards were a tool to identify ‘foreign’ individuals without necessarily expelling them, instead assigning them a more disadvantaged position in the community. Different identity cards (and later, citizenship) influenced the immediate everyday life of Alsatians. The cards played an important role in determining career prospects, financial stability, civic rights, and local reputation, as (for example) those without a card A struggled to find employment, had limited travel rights, and often lost their jobs to A-classified residents and returning Alsatian emigres. This formalised hierarchisation was contested by some Alsatians. My analysis of the appeal process firstly demonstrates that top-down and bottom-up constructions of belonging were entangled with each other: appeal letters were written in direct response to an initial classification by the administration, re-classification happened in response to persuasive appeals. Secondly, the examination of the appeal letters underscores that living in a transnational borderland characterised by national ambiguity was not at odds with emphatic declarations of Francophilia and French national belonging. Rather, national ambiguity and practices such as intermarriage fuelled the suspicions of French authorities regarding the national allegiance and trustworthiness of (some) Alsatians – the originally B-classified petitioners were thus required to claim their belonging to France through reference to multiple layers of belonging precisely because it was in question.

I have highlighted three major layers through which citizenship law, identity cards, and appeals constructed national belonging in Alsace in highly gendered ways: family ties, national sentiments, and local roots. However, not all layers and dimensions of national belonging outlined in this thesis applied to every Alsatian (or anyone beyond Alsace) to the same extent, nor is my analysis of such layers exhaustive. The positionality of individual residents of Alsace determined which arguments they were able to choose when claiming their place in the French nation. The biographical background of each appellant shaped their narrative: for example, their parents’ birthplace, their local reputation, and their spouse. Gender played a major role in

these avenues of claiming access to the nation and diverged from dominant gendered constructions of citizenship in France in multiple ways. Firstly, the descent-based classification scheme incorporated matrilineal components, overriding patrilineal citizenship regulations. Secondly, identity cards were distributed to individuals rather than family units and consequently challenged derivative citizenship by assigning married women separate (and potentially superior) cards to their husbands. Thirdly, appellants nonetheless linked individual cards to their family by invoking gendered principles of family unity and referencing family connections as ties to the nation. To some extent this process of (re-)classification widened access to formal national belonging: certain gendered avenues to the nation (e.g. marriage and motherhood for women and military service for men) were made available to petitioners of any gender by using family members as proxy. However, the appellants (along with approving committees) still reinforced distinctly gendered roles and tasks within the nation and family by framing their female relatives as ethno-cultural assimilators in contrast to male relatives as civic participants in the (national) community. Constructions of national belonging in Alsatian residents' appeal letters were inextricably tied to legalistic categories and orders considering their purpose was to achieve re-classification within the existing system and gain extended rights. The arguments brought forward by Alsatian petitioners were thus used in a strategic manner and did not necessarily reflect how (or if) the individual petitioners in a variety of other contexts identified as Alsatian, French, and/or German. This does not render these arguments per se any less impactful or relevant. After all, any conception of a national community is constructed for a specific purpose. In part, the many overlapping layers highlighted throughout this thesis (descent, civic commitment, and local integration) became visible in the appeal letters precisely because of strategic argumentation, meaning that petitioners may have listed as many reasons for re-classification as possible. The recurrence of certain themes and their interconnection with dominant nationalist discourses strongly suggests that gendered questions

of descent, performances of national loyalty, and integration in the local community were influential dimensions of national belonging in post-war Alsace, and maybe beyond.

While female and male appellants pursued similar strategies, their rhetoric appropriated gendered roles and tasks of their family members. Female relatives whose family was long-established in Alsace were highlighted in their roles as mothers and wives and provided a link to male in-laws who had served in the French military. Male relatives were praised for their military service and their good relations with other local ('French Alsatian') residents. In constructing these elements of belonging, applicants drew on not only gendered family relations but related them to gendered migration and marriage patterns. In this case study, the issue of migration most commonly came up when the father of appellants originated from Palatinate and had moved across the state border where he married a local Alsatian woman. The reference to 'local women' as gendered link to culture and traditions was thus often born out of necessity, given that many of the appellants' fathers were immigrants.

Local roots and integration in the local community were central to the notion of nested belonging brought forward in many appeal letters. Nested belonging – the idea that one's belonging to the immediate local community interlocked with and even warranted one's belonging to the more abstract national community – allowed Alsations to argue for their claim to national belonging despite continued national instability and repeatedly changing borders. This argument was a borderland response to administrative attempts to impose a descent-based understanding of Frenchness on the region. Framing local connections (meaning both the town/village community and the region) as qualifier for national belonging, rather than as suspicious source of resistance against nationalisation, localised the national community. Even though nested belonging did not fit into the assimilationist framework of central French administrators, this study has raised the question whether (some, or many) local state representatives such as mayors and triage committees were more understanding of the

importance of local integration and thus more willing to adapt French regulations and grant re-classification.

The identity card system was only transitional, lasting from December 1918 to January 1920 when the Treaty of Versailles came into effect. By January 1921, France harmonised its national citizenship law with the regulations of the peace treaty, resulting in the expatriation of recently reintegrated women who were married to men who had not applied for naturalisation. The patrilineal descent principle was thus forcefully reinstated and the (successful) appeals for identity card A might have seemed like wasted effort to many in retrospect. However, the transitional system in Alsace has broader implications for the history of constructions of national belonging in France and beyond. Firstly, the fact that the rules for determining inclusion and exclusion were different in the interim period raises the question why they were different. The descent-based classification of Alsace, which included matrilineal elements, indicates a shift in this particular context toward ethnic constructions of nationhood in French regulations and nationalist discourse. Exclusionary practices based in the rule of the majority in ‘civic’ France were revealed during this initial phase of reintegration and Frenchification. When confronted with difference – a predominantly German-speaking population with high proportions of German-born immigrants – the French administration set out to identify any elements of national ambiguity. This classification scheme was particularly jarring considering the minority treaties negotiated at the end of the First World War applied exclusively to the (new) nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe. France in contrast denied the existence of minorities within its own borders while simultaneously applying an ethnic vision of Frenchness to Alsace with the purpose of eliminating and/or assimilating a potential ethnic minority. As I have shown throughout this thesis, ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’ access to the national community was intertwined in Alsatian appeals rather than part of distinct types of nation-building. Furthermore, regardless of whether the petitioners constructed the national community as civic

or ethnic, the appeal processes put the burden of proof upon those of ‘mixed’ origin to justify their belonging.

The scholarly understanding of the identity cards as temporary system is a retrospective view which contrasts with the immediate concerns the cards caused and the opportunities they raised for contemporaries. Firstly, many Alsatian residents did not know for sure if the identity cards would confer (or impact the conferral of) citizenship. The fact that some A-cardholders were in fact not reintegrated as French citizens after January 1921 (i.e. Alsatian women married to Germans) caused further, highly gendered, insecurity. This period of change constitutes an essential subject of analysis, which increased instability, insecurity, and anxiety in the lives of people who were re-classified multiple times. We should not consider such transitional moments as exceptional or temporary but as moments of historical relevance. The analysis of the identity card system exposes multi-layered constructions of national belonging that remain more obscured in seemingly stable, one-dimensional citizenship law. The actions and arguments of both the French state and Alsatian individual in this moment of conflict revealed underlying tensions and exclusionary practices which rendered significant groups vulnerable, in this case especially women married to German-classified men and children of intermarried couples. Alsatian constructions of national belonging through multiple gendered layers – notably (matrilineal) descent, civic contributions, national sentiments, local integration, family connections – demonstrate that national communities are not imagined the same way by all their members (and those who aspire to be members). However, these local responses also underscore the heightened importance of national belonging to those at risk of exclusion.

Further analyses could relate the dominant themes in the appeals to public discourses regarding the reintegration of Alsace into France. For instance, how did Alsatian newspapers report on the identity cards as opposed to French and German public coverage beyond Alsace or how were political and administrative discussions affected by the appeals. Examining who exactly

evaluated the appeals as well as administrative communication between the French government in Paris, administrators in Strasbourg, and representatives in other parts of Alsace may be another promising approach. Considering rural/urban differences might add further insight into why nested belonging became a relevant strategy to gain acceptance as member of the French nation. The role of migration invites us to change our perspective on national belonging from an international to a local level. Whereas the French state considered Palatinate immigrants as foreigners, focusing on the geographical division created by the border, their descendants framed them as neighbours, emphasising the proximity between Palatinate and Alsatian border towns. More systematic analyses of class difference and religion could moreover show if (for instance) appeals by working-class Alsations challenged the bourgeois family ideal which dominated contemporary citizenship discourse. Many of the challenges of analysing multi-layered national belonging in Alsace and beyond (such as the difficulty of combining legal and discourse analysis, intersectional perspectives, and even biographical approaches) highlight the merit of collaborative research, such as in comparative and transnational projects, which broadens our scholarly perspectives and helps overcome linguistic and conceptual limitations. I have shown that national belonging in Alsace was constructed through multiple gendered layers which created competing visions of the national community. Multi-perspectivity and transdisciplinary research are crucial tools to explore these layers in more detail.

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