How successfully did the NSDAP create a Volksgemeinschaft between 1933-1939?

Through the years 1933-1939, the NSDAP attempted to create a Volksgemeinschaft throughout Germany with the aim of bettering as many areas of society as possible. The base idea of the Volk was to create a ‘people’s community’ which would make Germany self-sufficient and strong while fixing many of the problems that it faced as a country. Changes were implemented to peasantry, working and middle classes as well as landowners and big business but the three most important and arguably significant groups who were affected by the Volksgemeinschaft changes were German women, German youth and the religious. Although it can be difficult to judge, it seems that the most successful changes towards Volk were made to youth and secondly to women. The attempts at changing religion were not successful.

In general, the NSDAP's attempts to create a Volksgemeinschaft through education and youth were a success. They aimed to indoctrinate young people so they were Nazi-believing from a young age; boys were taught they should be ready for army work while girls were taught to be good mothers and wives. The way they managed to successfully bring children up to believe in Nazi ideals was by changing to syllabus to include mainly History, Maths and PE as well as the newly introduced Race Studies (or Eugenics) which taught that the Aryan race was superior to all others. By making boys learn Chemistry and Geography while the girls did Domestic Studies, the balance and expectations of the Volksgemeinschaft were instilled without the children even realising and in this respect the Volk was very successful. The most commonly mentioned Nazi youth campaign is the Hitler Youth which was set up alongside many other youth groups in order to instil Nazi ideals to the youth of Germany. The youth groups were a success in that they had a strong emphasis on teamwork and offered real opportunities as well as forwarding the Nazi regime. However, there were opposition groups to these youth groups such as the Edelweiss Pirates who were working class youths that formed gangs against the Hitler Youth. Overall despite the youth group opposition and the fact that standards of traditional subjects fell, the NSDAP did successfully manage to create a Volksgemeinschaft in the German youth that indoctrinated and instilled Nazi ideals into the children.

Although not a complete failure, the attempts made to bring women into the Volksgemeinschaft were only mildly successful. The aim was to encourage women to have children and stay at home instead of getting jobs so that they could look after their families while their husbands were working for their country. Women would contribute to their country by constructing the future generation and making more of the Aryan race. In order to encourage this behaviour, marriage loans were introduced to incentivise family life and allow those who otherwise couldn’t afford it to marry and start a family and allowances were also given to families in order to sustain them properly. Throughout the years, although 19,000 female civil servants lost their jobs (a success for the NSDAP) the number of female doctors increased which shows that the NSDAP’s attempts were not as successful as they had hoped. The main reason that these attempts failed was because of the build-up for war forcing women into otherwise ‘male jobs’, as more women were going into work, the birth rates did not