Dehumanization in the Holocaust:
An Analysis of Dehumanization in the Experiences of French Female Victims during the Holocaust

By Nitza Cabral

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Abstract:

World War II began with the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and was brought to France in 1940 upon the German invasion of France. My thesis will focus on the experience of French, Jewish and non-Jewish women during World War II, who suffered Nazi persecution. I will specifically examine subjects who are both French nationals and immigrants. My work identifies various acts of Nazi dehumanization, from within texts authored by victims, during or after the war. Identifying dehumanization allows me to assess its effects on victims, thus illuminating acts of resistance, which historian Brana Gurewitsch defines as any act which defies the goals of the oppressor. Thus, sheer survival was resistance for a Jewish victim during the Holocaust, given the Nazi goal of eradicating all Jewish persons. My goal is to provide a deeper understanding of the role of dehumanization within genocide, which Holocaust historiography has neglected. Dehumanization, the third of eight stages of genocide, serves a crucial function in the perpetration of mass murder. My thesis will serve a broader interpretation of genocide through the lens of the Holocaust.
I. Introduction

For decades historians of the Holocaust have debated the validity of gendered Holocaust history, for the apparent risk of diminishing the experience of another victim group. However historians like Joan Ringelheim, Elizabeth Baer and Myrna Goldenberg, early feminist Holocaust scholars, have offered that a gendered history of the Holocaust has the potential to fill gaps in the history, that are otherwise left open when refraining to acknowledge gender as an influential factor which guides one’s understanding.¹ To underscore this point, a women’s history of the Holocaust allows one to assess factors which contributed to the female victim experience on an exclusive level, which will better inform one’s understanding of how all victims experienced genocide. For this reason I have chosen to focus on women, those who were French, or were living in France at the time of their persecution, for my research. This group of women, whom I will collectively refer to as French-resident-victims, are composed of a diverse victim group, ranging from Jewish women whose families had lived in France for decades, to Jewish women who had moved to France recently with their families or for their education, to non-Jewish victims who were partisan fighters or members of the communist party. What is a common theme throughout the experiences of the women I have analyzed however, is their staunch dedication to France, regardless of whether or not they were French-born. We will see later that this sense of allegiance to France will influence victim behaviors within concentration camps and throughout the years they suffer persecution.

Such is the reason why an emphasis on France is necessary for my research. Holocaust scholarship has a tendency to focus primarily on victims who are from the Eastern European countries, as that is where the majority of Jews murdered came from. For example, Anne Frank,

¹ Elizabeth Baer and Myrna Goldenberg, Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis and the Holocaust, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003).
though hidden in the Netherlands, was a German born Jew. Elie Wiesel, another well-known Holocaust survivor and later scholar, was himself born in Romania. France is given more attention with regard to its role in the war, rather than the way it suffered as a direct result of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Hence I have chosen to pay special attention to French-resident victims. In addition, France represents a cultural hub in twentieth century Europe and thus exemplifies how many nationalities and language groups came to call France home. In my later chapters I will discuss the importance of language and culture in the experience of victims, further demonstrating that there is much to learn from the study of French-resident victims.

My subject matter begins in 1940, upon the German invasion of France when France was divided into two zones, the occupied zone in Northern France, and the unoccupied zone in Southern France. By choosing to assess primary and secondary sources which offer insight into France post-invasion, I hope to underscore the shock French citizens experienced once subjected to the horrors of World War II. I will provide a brief history of Jews in France as explained by historian Susan Zuccotti. Zuccotti is especially insightful in describing the lives of Jews in Vichy France, which notoriously became a collaborationist government throughout the course of WWII. What Zuccotti’s research reveals that is of particular importance to my work, is the protections and tolerance many Jews experienced while living in France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is especially important when considering the stark changes Jews began to experience upon the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis in 1933.

While historians have not neglected to research and write about the French experience during the Holocaust, scholarship which focuses primarily on dehumanization and its role in genocide is lacking. According to Dr. Gregory Stanton, a professor at Keene State College, in the

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eight stages of genocide, dehumanization is listed as the third, behind classification and symbolization. A deeper look into the latter two reveals that both fall into the category of dehumanization. Classification attempts to assign identities to Jews, among other victim groups, criminalize these identities and revoke certain liberties as a result (à la the Nuremberg Laws), thus beginning the deterioration of one’s individualism and humanity. Symbolization is dehumanizing in that it serves as the branding iron for victim groups, publicly ostracizing and legally villainizing victims. Though the third stage of genocide is not where dehumanization ceases to exist. Stanton wrote that genocide, “is not a linear process, but logically the later stages must be preceded by the earlier stages.”

Therefore dehumanization is linked to each stage of genocide and persists throughout the entire process. Hence it is crucial to examine dehumanization and the ways it may differ between multiple genders, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of genocide and how it functions. It is further necessary though, to examine dehumanization from the victim perspective, to avoid glorifying the genocidal atrocities of the perpetrator, through the dissemination of perpetrator history. While it is important to understand the role of the perpetrator in a history of genocide- and with regard to the Holocaust a history of Adolf Hitler, the Nazi party and World War II are all essential to one’s proper understanding- it is nonetheless paramount that the primary focus remain on the victims, as they are the group whose voice was initially silenced and threatened.

Thus, my thesis will use victim and survivor testimony to identify instances of dehumanization and interpret how these atrocities were experienced by victims. Through such an analysis, one will come to a greater understanding of the key role dehumanization plays in

I will compare and contrast instances of French-resident-victims’ Jewish and non-Jewish dehumanization in order to identify the many forms dehumanization took during the Holocaust. My discussion will first begin with an analysis of the importance of women’s history and then progress into a more focused examination of the experiences of Jewish victims as opposed to their non-Jewish counterparts. Both of these chapters will set the precedent for my final discussion of dehumanization, resistance and how the two are interconnected. This essay will reveal the crucial role dehumanization plays as a function of genocide.

II. The Significance of Women’s History when Studying the Holocaust:

When studying any history, it is understood that one must evaluate a specific group of people who share something that is so inherent to their selfhood it colors the ways in which they experience the world. Thus, it makes perfect sense to evaluate the experience of female victims in the Holocaust the way one might evaluate the experience of children, or of prisoners only from a nationality. Women’s Holocaust history though, has been criticized for alleged attempts at valorizing the actions of women during the Holocaust. Historians have additionally argued that to focus on the female victim experience is to diminish or in some way negate that of the male victim during the Holocaust. I will argue that both of the aforementioned statements are inconclusive. One must always consider one’s background when attempting to understand their history, in order to secure the most comprehensive grasp of said history. John K. Roth said, “an emphasis on what happened to women during the Holocaust reveals what otherwise would remain hidden: a fuller picture of the unprecedented and unrelenting killing that was the final

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4 Baer and Goldenberg, pp. xxvii - xxviii.
Thus, women’s history is essential to Holocaust history for the ways in which it illuminates particular experiences that only women could have had. Joan Ringelheim, writing in the 1980s, was one of the first Holocaust scholars to emphasize women’s history. She has asserted that applying traditional female roles to the lives of female victims contributes to an understanding of the Holocaust, as these social roles inherently influence behavior.

A popular critique of women’s Holocaust history, that Ringelheim and other scholars, myself included, are attempting to debunk in their efforts of studying the female experience of the Holocaust, is that which asserts women’s history to be another attempt at pushing the feminist agenda. I am not studying women in particular because I wish to glorify the actions or inactions female victims took during their persecution; rather I wish to highlight their experiences as distinctive because they are women and not in spite of the fact. Women’s history is worthy of our research because of its uniqueness, and its simultaneous commonness. If it is assumed that half the total human population is female, then the female experience should, in theory, make up half of history. To fail to represent women’s history completely, risks the erasure of half of history. Thus we must direct our efforts to women’s history. This is different from feminist history. My analysis will not include any claims of valor in the experiences of these women because to do so implies choice and agency. Women who were persecuted under the Nazi regime were stripped of their freedoms and condemned to a version of life permitted by Nazi policy. Victims had no control over the outcomes of their life and therefore no real choices. Thus, to claim heroism in the acts of victims risks neglecting the crimes which situated them in a

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circumstance that required them to make extraordinary decisions in the first place. Nazi victims, imprisoned in concentration, labor and death camps, had no choices and no free-will; they often acted in accordance with survival. A victim’s ability to make a decision was always confined within the state of their imprisonment and therefore will always fall under the category of a choiceless choice. What these women did was not in an effort to promote themselves as the male equal or the emerging matriarch; what these women did was, and should be viewed solely as, survival. “Surviving is different from living.”

“Most differences in their [men and women] testimony can and needs to be explained by the fact that men and women assign meaning disparately on three different levels: men and women experience, remember, and recount events differently. In other words, because of gender, men and women experience the same treatment in different ways.”

- Pascale Rachel Bos

Historian Pascale Bos emphasizes the necessity to consider personal identity when analyzing Holocaust testimony, and specifically one’s identity as either man or woman. Such is the case given the strict separation of men and women in concentration camps and the potential ways variation in gender culture impacts one’s experience and color one’s interpretation of these experiences. It is further crucial to assess a gendered history of the Holocaust because one’s gender influences one’s perception of not only experience but also memory. For example, women often cite their memories of being forced to strip to complete nudity as a key turning point for them as victims, when they began to feel the most helpless, or hopeless: “They set our mothers before us naked. Here mothers are no longer mothers to their children.”

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7 Ringelheim, p.752.
thirties and forties, women were seen as conservative creatures who were never supposed to reveal their bodies to anyone but their husbands. When the Nazis forced their victims to publicly strip, they were assaulting their victim’s selfhood, and robbing victims of any final sense of dignity.

Individual people find different things to be of significance, and therefore will remember different experiences. It is hence necessary to assess female survivors’ testimony separately, as it includes experiences or memories that a man’s may not, per Bos’s claim:

What survivors select [to share about their experiences] therefore reflects their version of reality, filtered in part through the changing lens of trauma (that which cannot be told), time (bringing both aging and the possibility for reflexive distance), the psychological process of self-preservation, and the narrative conventions of that process.¹⁰

Thus a survivor will choose to share the memories that stand out as the most significant to them, but what earns such a designation varies across gender, age of persecution, nationality, etc.

Another example lies within French-Jewish survivor Micheline Maurel’s account of her experiences, where she recalls, “In so many folk songs we listened to… it was always the man who went away and the woman who stayed behind waiting. There was no precedent in folklore for the deportation of women,” (emphasis added).¹¹ When men were deported or taken away from their families in the earlier years of the Nazi regime, it was less surprising, as men were typically targeted for the physical threat they posed. As Maurel said, the persecution of women and children was never foreshadowed in history to the degree that Nazis would target them.

Historically when women and children were attacked it was the result of desperation, often society dictated that women, children and the elderly be given favor in times of trouble. What differs regarding Nazi persecution, was that these same groups of people were targeted at an

¹⁰ Bos, p.31.
equal rate to men, if not at a more expedited rate for the perceived burden they imposed. Therefore it is worth mentioning that women may have experienced greater shock that they were subjected to such atrocities at the outset of Nazi rule. The Holocaust forced women to interact with certain horrors that they otherwise might have been protected from. This demonstrates how Nazis perceived Jewish women in particular not as women and therefore people, but as subhuman. The Nazis did not view the Jews as human and thus had no regard for maintaining societal norms or traditional gender roles assigned to humans. To the Nazis, a Jew was a Jew.

Despite the Nazis inhumane perspective, their female victims nonetheless experienced life as biologically female. While many women were no longer able to menstruate due to malnourishment, others were still able to, and did, conceive while in concentration camps. When this happened fellow female prisoners took on the burden of delivering the child, possibly performing an abortion, or murdering the newborn to save the mother’s life.\(^\text{12}\) Additionally, women still fell easy victims to sexual assault or rape in concentration camps, whether by an SS officer or a fellow male prisoner; despite women not being treated as people, their bodies very much were. For this reason it is necessary to evaluate the experience of female victims during the Holocaust separately from men, because women experienced certain things men simply could not due to their biological and anatomical restrictions. Upon arrival to killing centers, women with young children, infants or babies were typically murdered in the gas chambers. It was women, not men, who suffered this fate alongside their children. Historian Joan Ringelheim said, “women with children may have been more vulnerable than anyone except children by themselves.”\(^\text{13}\) Ringelheim said this may have been the case due to potential stressors women

\(^\text{13}\) Ringelheim, p.745.
experienced in conjunction with “pregnancy, childbirth, and infant care,” all of which were, and often remain today, female responsibilities.\textsuperscript{14}

It was not uncommon for Jewish women to pose as non-Jewish citizens, under false names, and hide in the open. Judith Greenberg shares the story of one such Jewish woman, Denise Siekierski, from France, who operated under numerous false names during the war years. This allowed her to work with the French Resistance. In one particular instance, Denise posed as a fraught, ignorant French girl to glean information from an SS officer. Greenberg wrote that, “This ability to assume multiple identities and think beyond the boundaries of religion and gender allowed the flexibility to remain hidden while in public.”\textsuperscript{15} This “flexibility” as Greenberg calls it, was not something afforded to Jewish men, who were often stopped in the streets and forced to reveal their genitals in an effort to prove their Jewish identity via the confirmation of a circumcised penis. It is necessary to include such information in a discussion on gender in the Holocaust because once more, it helps to discern key differences in the experiences of men and women. This contributes to a greater understanding of the Holocaust and genocide. All this is to say that women did and will continue to, experience things differently from men because they are women.

It is likely that women experienced some degree of shock at the barbarous conditions they were subjected to, in a way different from how men may have experienced it. Many men were previously exposed to the horrors of war; it is likely that more men had witnessed brutal death, than women, thus it is possible for men and women to have experienced their victimization differently. This does not suggest that men in any way were able to cope with the

\textsuperscript{14} Ringelheim, p.745.
Nazi atrocities, however it underscores the differences with which men and women perceived these atrocities. Doris Bergen wrote, “In Auschwitz, men generally had a better chance of being chosen for work…Toward the end of the war, however, the balance shifted because the Germans considered young men too dangerous and preferred women laborers.” Bergen informs us that at the start of deportations, men were allowed to live and work as laborers, more often than women, because of their perceived physical superiority. However, Bergen also tells us that this situation reversed towards the end of the war. Victims that were allowed to live were dehumanized daily, treated worse than animals, and fought in each moment of every day to survive. Whether or not this is considered ‘living,’ is up to the survivor. Was it perhaps a better, or easier fate to be murdered immediately? It is not our place to judge one outcome superior to another, only the victims can make that distinction. Yet it is nonetheless necessary to focus on the point that gender affected one’s treatment within concentration camps. Furthermore, gender effected one’s overall experience in concentration camps, as gender culture inevitably influenced the victim experience.

Men and women encountered different treatment both within homogenized groups of men and women and outside of them. Joan Ringelheim interviewed numerous female, Holocaust survivors to learn their personal histories. One woman, Rose, shared:

Woman friendship is different than man friendship you see… We have these motherly instincts, friend instincts more. If two or three women are friends they can be closer than two or three men… Men were friends there too. They talked to each other but they didn’t, wouldn’t, sell their bread for an apple for the other guy. They wouldn’t sacrifice nothing. See, that was the difference.

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17 Bergen, p.260.
18 Ringelheim, p.749.
It is not that men did not cultivate valuable and meaningful connections while imprisoned, it is that these connections differed from those fostered between women. Holocaust historians who have focused on female histories, have claimed that women attempted to maintain similar roles inside concentration camps, that they may have held outside of camps. These roles ranged anywhere from mother, daughter, sister, and friend, despite some women never having played these roles before the Holocaust. For example, a childless twenty-four year old took on a maternal role to an eighteen year old in Auschwitz, and the pair cared for one another as a mother and daughter. Another survivor recalled, “When a woman would get sick in the winter… the healthier women would take off their underwear and give it to the sick one.” Women fought for their lives by caring for one another. Micheline Maurel, imprisoned in Neubrandenburg, recalled that on one particular run prisoners were forced on, from their work site to their camp: “Despite the support the Léger sisters gave me, each holding me by an arm, I fell several times; nor was I the only one.” Female survivors share their attempts to huddle together during roll calls and to help one another stay on their feet to avoid beatings, and while these are not specific to female victims alone, these are nonetheless examples of solidarity among prisoners. Still, women were undoubtedly inclined towards caring for one another and this can ultimately be attributed to maternal instinct.

It is indisputable that the gendered, social roles of women in daily life had certain concrete guidelines. Many of these specifically pertained to the duties assigned to women within the household, or the manner in which women were expected to carry themselves. For example,

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19 Baer and Goldenberg, p.xxiii.
20 Ringelheim, pp. 747-748.
22 Maurel, p. 17.
historian Judith Greenberg wrote, “It has been observed that Jewish women often felt responsibility to remain with and care for their families… then another role they assumed was that of the non-Jew since they were able to “pass” in ways that men could not.” 23 In order to best understand what is meant here, we must evaluate the statement in two parts. The first half of the quote refers to the role of the mother in a family order. The expectation that a mother will look after all members of her family is universal throughout various cultures and is thus applicable to the experience of all female victims who were also mothers. The second part of Greenberg’s claim emphasizes a particular aspect of persecution that is specific to Jewish women only. Many women were able to conceal their true identities under a false name alone. A child, Ruth Kapp Hartz, living in France with her parents as immigrants from Germany during the Holocaust, lived for years as “Renee,” an attempt to protect her from persecution. 24 In another instance, Minna D, a Polish immigrant to France, operated under several false identities, all of which presented her as a non-Jewish person, in order to fight with the French Resistance. 25 It is important to make note of the necessity for Jewish resistance fighters to disguise their Jewish identities, even among other partisan fighters because despite one’s position as anti-Nazi, antisemitism had nonetheless been customary in Europe for decades. It was not uncommon for a communist resistance fighter to also be staunchly antisemitic. 26 Thus the need for total secrecy for Jews was paramount.

Something that existed in both non-Jewish and Jewish female victim groups was a woman’s instinct to take care of those around her for whom she cared. Charlotte Delbo recalled,

23 Greenberg, p.139.
24 Stacy Cretzmeyer, Your Name is Renée: Ruth Kapp Hartz’s Story as a Hidden Child in Nazi-occupied France, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
26 Zuccotti, p.139.
“a woman sits down in the snow… We hold back from saying to her: “Not in the snow, you’ll catch cold.” It is still a reflex action of the memory and of former notions.”

This anecdote is not only an example of lingering memories from the outside world that would sometimes creep into the minds of prisoners and remind them of a world outside of the hell they were subjected to, but it also demonstrates a feminine quality that ultimately shaped womanhood: nurturing. Even if one had yet to experience motherhood, every woman was a daughter, and likely a sister. Women in 20th century families were taught and expected to look after their siblings and perhaps their fathers as well. The moment Delbo describes is instinctual; it is the concerned mother looking out for her child, the responsible sister caring for her siblings, the diligent daughter holding the family together, it is the woman. Furthermore, the way in which women were able to translate their roles as mothers, daughters, sisters and friends, into their lives in imprisonment, was potentially more fluid than men’s.

Joan Ringelheim wrote that women were perhaps able to, “apply and modify previous gender roles more easily than do men,” implying that it was not man’s inability to uphold his role as man within a life of imprisonment, but that it may have simply been a more natural shift for women. If men were more commonly viewed as household providers, how then is a man able to provide for his family in a similar way while confined in a concentration camp? This relates back to the concept of choiceless-choices: that is, it was not a man’s choice to cease providing for his family, but perhaps the circumstantial consequences of being torn from one’s family and being unable to prevent the death of one’s family members. The same can be said for a son. If a son had certain, male-specific duties (i.e. taking over the family business) to his family, Nazi law no longer permitted him to see to these duties, as all Jewish activities were eventually

27 Delbo, p.38.
criminalized. Ringelheim is not implying that men simply left behind all instinctual duties once sent to concentration camps, rather that women were perhaps more readily able to maintain these roles within the camps, because the female role relied more heavily on relationships with others, than it did outside factors like work or schooling.

Historian Judith Greenberg wrote, in regard to traditional female roles translating to camp life: “If creating a home was a job traditionally ascribed to women, then in the camp these women provided a kind of home within the horror.” This statement is successful in avoiding glorification of the way female victims attempted to survive. Life inside concentration camps was hardly life and victims sought out survival above all else. Yet it is important to recognize that the relationships many women formed were crucial to their survival. Survivors have shared that while imprisoned in concentration camps, had they not friends to bring them food while they lay ill in the infirmary, it is likely they would have died; had they no companions or partners who propped them up and huddled together during grueling roll calls, they would have collapsed and been beaten to death. For some women the desire to protect one’s loved ones was enough reason to cling to life; if the women withheld their talents from one another and refrained from engaging in the arts, morale may have sunk low enough for some women to relinquish all efforts of survival and wait for death. Still, a similar case may be made with regard to male relationships. Nonetheless, relationships between women, whether used for bartering goods, or for ensuring survival, ultimately shaped the experience of female victims throughout the Holocaust.

III. Similarities and Variations in the Experience of Jewish and Non-Jewish Victims:

29 Greenberg, p.150.
30 Maurel.
What additionally inherently shaped the victims' experience of persecution was their identity as Jewish or non-Jewish. Similarly to womanhood, being Jewish ascribed certain fates that did not befall other victim groups, simply on the grounds for what it meant to be Jewish in twentieth century Europe. It is thus equally crucial to compare and contrast the experiences of Jewish and non-Jewish female victims for the following reasons: being Jewish created a particularly unique experience for victims on the basis of Nazi principles (i.e. that Jews made up an inferior race of people who inhibited the Aryan race from thriving, thus calling for the complete annihilation of Jewish people and culture); understanding the differences in dehumanization of Jewish and non-Jewish female victims informs one’s understanding of dehumanization overall. The underlying fact of this discussion is that the Nazis, under Adolf Hitler, committed crimes against humanity, subjected their victims to inhumane, diabolical atrocities and the experience of their victims can never be ranked or given status over one another. My analysis serves to offer a greater understanding of how dehumanization specifically as a function of genocide, varied among victim groups. Such an analysis provides a clearer understanding of the effects of dehumanization on victims, as it accounts for other variables such as identity and personal background.

Perhaps the most critical difference between Jewish and non-Jewish victims is that the imminent fate of all Jews in Nazi territories was death. Doris Bergen has shed light on Hitler’s goal of eliminating all people deemed ‘unworthy to society,’ a group which included disabled peoples, political opponents, homosexuals, and many others, as well as Jews.31 In 1939 Hitler approved a program which called for the murder, so-called “euthanasia,” of children and adults born with physical or mental disabilities.32 Though Jews were not the first victim group slated

31 Bergen, p.159.
32 Bergen, p.159.
for murder, they were the largest. Hitler also believed that Jews were just one of many groups of people who created an obstacle for his so-called superior, ‘Aryan,’ race, of obtaining Lebensraum. Lebensraum translates from German to mean ‘living space,’ and Bergen tells us that this was Hitler’s plan for geographical and populous expansion. Hitler believed that the Aryan race needed more physical space to live and to thrive, and that to obtain this space the people occupying these lands needed to be removed. He planned on removing these people forcibly, through murder, or through enslavement which would see their eventual extinction.33Still, Jews remained the most prominent threat to Nazi dominance and belief and were therefore the primary target for immediate murder. Nazis persuaded hostile governments to hunt their own Jewish citizens for deportation in order to avoid military repercussions. Such was the case in France, whereupon the German invasion in 1940, the country was split into two zones, the occupied and the unoccupied zones (north and south). One survivor recalled, “French police were redoubling their efforts to track down the Jews still in hiding in the small villages. The police had to fill their quotas in order to placate the Nazis, who had strict timetables and refused to send trains to the east unless they were filled to capacity.”34 The woman writing from memory here, Ruth Kapp Hartz, offers a demonstration of the painstaking efforts with which Nazis sought out Jews specifically, for persecution and murder.

While many French Jews felt loyal first to their country rather than their ethnicity, the Nazi regime was not their first exposure to antisemitism. Zuccotti notes that “[Antisemitism] began to flourish in France in the early 1880s.” Zuccotti cites, La France, by Edouard Drumont, which “blamed all the ills of modern France on the Jews, taking occasional swipes at Protestants,

33 Bergen, p.52.
34 Cretzmeyer, p.90.
Freemasons and anticlericals… he assured that Jews were responsible for Marxism.” This is especially useful in identifying the potential roots of French antisemitism when considered in conjunction with the contemporaneous publication of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a notoriously antisemitic book which asserted that Jews had a worldwide conspiracy for global domination, and associated groups like the Freemasons and Marxists with Jews. This burgeoning French antisemitism is important to address when considering potential differences in the experience of Jewish victims, because it demonstrates the historical context in which Nazism arrived on French territory. Antisemitism had existed for centuries, dating back from the Spanish expulsion of Jews in 1492, to the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 586 BC. For other victim groups however, such as disabled people or political opponents, Nazi hatred for them was born out of specific contemporary rhetoric and scholarship that saw its beginnings in the twentieth century. For example, the pseudo-science of eugenics took off in the twentieth century, and Nazi hatred of communists and other political parties stemmed from the successes of those movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This long history of antisemitism in Europe specifically offers a potential explanation for the ease with which the Nazis seemed to have persecuted their victims. Even places where many Jewish communities had thrived for decades saw, with the rise of Hitler and Nazism, antisemitism come to head, particularly for those who were not nationals or citizens of the countries in which they resided. For instance, Zuccotti argues that at the start of World War II, “the French government promised enlisting immigrants and their families protection from expulsion or internment - a measure that the Vichy regime revoked a year later.” Jews, who had relocated to France to escape antisemitism in countries like Germany and Austria, often expressed a deep devotion to France for the liberties it had

35 Zuccotti, p.11.
36 Zuccotti, p.32.
granted them as Jewish citizens. While Nazi policy dictated that all Jews, regardless of citizenship, were to be persecuted, France attempted to save her own citizens as best as possible: “For many, ‘they’ were above all foreigners, and the Jews in general, who had dragged France into a hopeless and unnecessary war for personal reasons.” The “personal reasons,” mentioned here are a reference to Hitler’s antisemitic policies and calls for the murder of all Jews, alludes to how some French citizens perceived France’s real enemy. As historian Audrey Mallet wrote:

The reasons for expelling Jewish refugees were both mundane and ideological. With the arrival of tens of thousands of government employees in summer 1940, Vichy grew overcrowded and apartments were at a premium. The fact that 95 percent of the foreigners expelled were Jewish, however, is proof that Jews were the main target. The evictions of foreign Jews marked the first step in the government’s reduction of any Jewish presence in Vichy.

Mallet further shows that Vichy had previously been a town where the Jewish community thrived and enjoyed protections from the local government, especially in cases of overt acts of antisemitism. This ultimately was a factor in the migration of many eastern European Jews to Vichy, in that Vichy differed from other French cities where, “the integration of foreign Jews, whose strong East European culture set them apart, proved more problematic.” Still Mallet stresses that the tourist nature of Vichy required Jewish immigrants and non-Jewish immigrants alike, to assimilate in order to best serve visitors to the French spa town. The example of Vichy, and the Vichy regime, demonstrates that Jews who were ostracized within their home countries could expect further persecution in countries which they had made their home via immigration.

37 Zuccotti, p.41
39 Mallet, p.27.
40 Mallet, p.25.
41 Mallet, p.25.
The rapidity with which Jews suffered their deadly fates, as well as the degree to which they suffered, amply demonstrates how Jewish victims were often the first to be subjected to the most brutal treatment and among the first to be targeted for murder. Zuccotti tells us that roughly 3,000 Jews were murdered in French internment camps and that, “They were the first casualties of the Holocaust in France, and they died because of French, not German persecution.”\footnote{Zuccotti, p.67.} Zuccotti sheds light on the conditions in unoccupied France upon the German invasion, where foreign Jews, previously detained for their immigration status, were now detained for their Jewish identities. She further states, “when the Nazis called for the expulsions of foreign Jews from the unoccupied zone in August 1942 for deportation to the east – foreign Jews still in internment camps were the first victims.”\footnote{Zuccotti, p.67.} This is crucial to consider when examining the Jewish experience especially given that immigrants to France who were \textit{not} Jewish, were eventually released.\footnote{Zuccotti, p.67.} The horrid conditions of French internment camps that many French-Jewish residents and citizens were subjected to upon the arrival of the German army in France were in fact lethal. These internment camps functioned both as transit camps for deportees, and for detention/holding centers for Jews, as was the case with the father of Hélène Berr, a French-Jewish woman living in Paris at the time of the German invasion.\footnote{Hélène Berr. \textit{The Journal of Hélène Berr.} (New York: Weinstein Books, 2008).} These holding camps, or \textit{centres d’accueil} often imprisoned Jewish persons for purported violations of Nazi policies that were slowly being implemented in the city.\footnote{Zuccotti, p.67.} While these camps did detain non-Jews, these prisoners often fared better in general because they were not Jewish and therefore received less
harsh treatment, in addition to the fact that they were more likely to be released, whereas Jews had a greater chance of being either forced back into the camps or deported altogether.\(^{47}\)

A similarity that exists between Jewish and non-Jewish victim groups was the way in which one’s family was additionally sought after for persecution. Jewish families were much more obviously slated for murder, as was dictated by Nazi law. However the families of various other victim groups (resistance fighters, Roma and Sinti in particular) were also likely to be targeted for persecution. Their inability to stop the government issued murder of loved ones, had the potential to create paralyzing grief. Similarly, family members of political opponents, resistance fighters, and members of the Roma and Sinti communities, often faced consequences that were similar to that which threatened their loved ones. For example, Roma and Sinti, an ethnic group that was targeted by Nazis for mass murder similarly to the Jewish people for perceived racial inferiority, were persecuted as entire families. Thus, all Roma and Sinti were slated for murder and ultimate eradication in the same way that Jews were.\(^{48}\) Given the fact that Nazi goals were to murder all Jews, Roma and Sinti, towards the end of the war it became far less common to see entire Jewish or Roma and Sinti families. Ruth Hartz wrote,

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\ldots\text{we were one of the few families on the train, and I remember how the passengers stared at us with bewildered looks. So rare was it, in those days, to see that some [Jewish] people had somehow managed to end up together.}\(^{49}\)
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Hartz demonstrates the need to assert that while it was not uncommon for the loved ones of other victim groups to face persecution, Jewish families were always, undeniably, confronted with death.

\(^{47}\) Zuccotti, p.75.  
\(^{48}\) Bergen, pp.257-258.  
\(^{49}\) Cretzmeyer, p.188-189.
While Jews were not given any semblance of agency or choice with regard to their fates in Nazi's Europe, women were perhaps able to create options for themselves within the confines of their persecution. This took the form of changing one’s name. Many women were able to operate under false names and this was a tool women across victim groups used. Non-Jewish resistance fighters were known for using a different name in each operation, and Jewish women in France frequently Gallicized their names in an attempt to remove themselves from all ties to their Jewish identity. What this highlights is both an act of resistance and reception of dehumanization. The person who resists under a false identity is impeding Nazi goals by engaging in acts of resistance, yet the decision to change one’s name risks the disintegration of one’s personal identity, given that one’s name makes up a large portion of one’s identity. This is especially the case if that name reflects one’s ethnicity, nationality or cultural background, as was common for Jewish women in twentieth century Europe. Ruth Kapp Hartz, who survived the Holocaust as Renée, wrote in her memoir, “I had thought of myself as French from my earliest memories,” (despite the fact that Ruth was born to German-Jewish immigrants). Just a few pages later it is evident how her sense of identity evolved as a result of Nazi persecution: “I only understand that we were in the middle of a war, and that our lives were in danger because we were not French. We were Jewish.” While Ruth is able to maintain her Jewish identity, she has lost her grip on her French identity, to which she previously felt strongly rooted. Her attachment to being French can be seen when she insists on going to see Marshal Petain when he comes to her city, and her father reluctantly abides. At just five years old, Ruth has quickly learned that being Jewish revokes her French identity, as it is the sole fact that she is Jewish that the Nazis are

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50 Cretzmeyer, p.20.
51 Cretzmeyer, p.24.
52 Cretzmeyer, p.31.
persecuting her family: “It would be better, it seemed to me, if we could forget altogether about being Jewish.” Here Ruth offers a clear depiction of the effects of dehumanization and persecution on the victim, that is willingness to forget who one is in order to survive.

A further example of variations of dehumanization among Jewish and non-Jewish victims is found in an analysis of the fear with which victims lived their lives. “Jews in particular were also terrorized by the constant possibility of transfer to a German labor unit,” is one description of the anxiety Jewish victims had when detained in French camps. Another example of living in fear comes once more from the young Hartz who recalled a conversation with a woman whom she did not know, on a walk home from school one day: “Maybe I shouldn’t have mentioned Papa. Now she knows he does shift work somewhere in the city… I will take the long way to our apartment. No one must see me.” The paranoia and fear in Hartz’s words is apparent, which has resulted from her parents, aunt, uncle and older cousin constantly reminding her that no one must know that she is Jewish, or the whereabouts of her family. Jews increasingly developed fear for their futures, regardless of where they lived, because of Hitler’s determination to completely rid the world of Jews. Other victim groups, such as members of various political parties, were also well-versed in the art of concealment. To outwardly deny their true beliefs in order to avoid persecution was common, in addition to the inevitable fear that existed around all political activities in which one engaged. An essential difference to highlight in this instance, however, is that one’s political affiliation often resembled something of a choice. In the eyes of the Nazis, being Jewish did not.

53 Cretzmeyer, p.126.
54 Zuccotti, p.77.
55 Cretzemeyer, p.8.
56 Cretzmeyer, p.17.
Finally, a key method of dehumanization that was unique to Jewish victims, was the Nazi attempt to destroy not only all Jewish persons, but Jewish history and culture as well. In the *American Journal of International Law*, Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish jurist who had fled Nazi persecution and coined the term “genocide”, wrote:

> The crime of genocide involves a wide range of actions… mass murder does not convey the specific losses to civilization in the form of the cultural contributions which can be made only by groups of people united through national, racial or cultural characteristics.\(^{57}\)

A key component of Nazi ideology was the eradication of not only the Jewish people, but also their history. Bergen asserts that the Nazis went as far as to attempt to rewrite Jewish history from the Nazi perspective, in multiple ways, though in particular through the use of atrocity photographs which aimed to debase their victims.\(^ {58}\) Thus, there was an inherent pressure for Jewish victims that, in addition to surviving, involved the preservation of their culture as they knew it. Historian Rebecca Rovit wrote, “In ghettos such as those of Warsaw and Vilna, members of the Jewish councils initiated clandestine efforts to preserve Jewish community and culture.”\(^ {59}\) Rovit is thus demonstrating Jewish efforts to maintain both some semblance of normalcy through the consistency of tradition, and the efforts of Jewish solidarity. Such solidarity is a form of implicit resistance. While one’s Jewishness ultimately tied one to another Jewish person, a similar sense of unity existed among other victim groups such as political opponents, especially Communists, and non-Jewish partisan fighters who shared a nationality. One example comes from Micheline Maurel, a French-Jewish survivor, who wrote about her memory of French prisoners singing the Marseillaise while imprisoned at the Neubrandenburg


\(^{58}\) Bergen, pp.7-11.

concentration camp, despite the obvious risks. While Maurel was Jewish, she does not specify whether or not her fellow French prisoners are also Jewish, though she does emphasize their shared French identity. Thus Maurel implies that for her, and her fellow countrywomen, being French was a unifying factor which ultimately helped give them strength to survive. By remaining unified with other French women, Maurel was engaging in the preservation of French culture.

While there existed similarities among Jewish and non-Jewish victims either on the basis of nationality or otherwise, it is nonetheless true that these similarities and differences contribute to a critical assessment of victim experience. For example, Jews and non-Jews alike changed their names in order to protect themselves though, there are far more existing variances among Jewish and non-Jewish victims. One must consider Nazi goals when examining victim responses, such as the goal of total Jewish annihilation, which called for Jews to be murdered first and foremost. In turn this created an inherent fear for Jews that to simply be alive was to risk being murdered in Nazi Europe. By-standers gradually accepted this and were able to do so more readily as a result of the long history of antisemitism that existed in Europe. Additionally, Jewish families were less likely to remain complete throughout the course of the Holocaust and therefore Jewish survivors will have memories and emotions regarding their trauma that differ greatly from victims who were targeted as individuals rather than in families (i.e. political opponents). Furthermore, Nazi persecution of Jews was unique in that it went beyond the physical world and called for the destruction of Jewish history and culture. As Lemkin claimed, such crimes are the very components of a genocide. Dehumanization is inherent in all of the

60 Maurel, p.42.
61 Lemkin, p.147.
Nazi crimes listed above and is therefore merits our attention when researching victim experience.

IV. Victim’s Interpretation of Dehumanizing Treatment during Persecution:

Dehumanization is a term that has only recently emerged in Holocaust scholarship and is almost non-existent in early feminist scholarship on the Holocaust. This however does not mean that it was not present. A leading scholar in women’s Holocaust history, Joan Ringelheim wrote in 1985 about female survivors, “they survived because the Nazis did not kill them; but they lived (trying to be human) because of what they did. Surviving is different from living.”62 What victims did in concentration camps cannot be called living, because to live is to act with motivations beyond survival. To live is to feel alive, to have emotions, to have hopes and dreams, to feel love and to share these things with those whom one loves. What the Nazis subjected their victims to was not life, but a calculated form of being that was meant to strip the victim of all sense of dignity, self-worth, and humanity, in order to ease the ways in which the Nazis intended to murder their victims. Dehumanization is the third stage in the eight stages of genocide. Its placement so early on in the process is indicative of the crucial role it plays in the success of a genocide. Dehumanization serves two key functions: the first, is to strip the victim’s humanity in the eyes of perpetrators and non-victims; the second is to mitigate chances of victim uprising as a result of lack of willpower, morale, and physical as well as mental strength. I will

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62 Ringelheim, p.752.
first analyze the success of dehumanization in creating perpetrators out of collaborators and collaborators out of bystanders.

So-called bystanders to the Holocaust (i.e., not outright perpetrators or Nazis but those who witnessed or, by lack of intervention, implicitly permitted persecution), were not necessarily convinced of Nazi politics. This is evident when considering the fact that the Nazi party never held a majority, Hitler was never elected to office, rather he was appointed, and the Nazi seats gained in Parliament were the result of Hitler’s position as Chancellor, which he was appointed to in 1933.63 This is how a genocide can be carried out on the scale of the Holocaust. Survivor Betty Lauer recalled, “It started with demonizing. And the demonization goes on and on and on, all of a sudden the ‘other’ becomes the ‘other’ that’s not human, and then it becomes the ‘other’ that you can just destroy in gas chambers.”64 Thus the Nazis needed a way to villainize their victims in the eyes of the public, especially in countries like France, whose citizens were not party members or compelled to German allegiance in any capacity.

The second function of dehumanization is to devastate the soul of victims so completely, that death is more appealing than the hell the Nazis brought to life. Micheline Maurel wrote,

At any moment I would have to run to the barracks with the twelve holes [latrines]. It was so far to go. When I reached it, the mere thought of dragging myself back to the sewing room, only to have to return in a few minutes, was very disheartening. I was short of breath… I prayed to God to let me die on the spot. I also called for my mother. [my emphasis].65

Here Maurel is describing a time in the concentration camp when she had dysentery and was assigned to work as a seamstress. She mentions in previous passages how this assignment was a

63 Bergen,
65 Maurel, p.92.
luxury, as it was indoors and not hard labor; however, the agony she suffered from the dysentery was enough to push her weakened body over the edge. In that moment death felt like the only relief to her torment. This is a clear demonstration of how Maurel was dehumanized through the atrocious conditions of concentration camps and the brutal treatment she received while imprisoned.

After the war, Raphael Lemkin commented on the ‘Final Solution,’ writing, “The objective of such a plan would be disintegration of… the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of individuals belonging to such groups.”66 Lemkin understood that according to Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, total eradication of the Jews would be impossible without the total annihilation of Jewish identity. Thus, genocide calls for dehumanization in order to wear away at one’s dignity and sense of individuality, the things which make up one’s personhood and sense of self. Doris Bergen wrote, “The process of crushing people’s sense of dignity and worth often began with destroying their identity and honors as women or men.”67 Bergen underscores the point I aim to emphasize here: genocide is not possible without dehumanization, which is why an analysis of the ways in which various victims groups experience dehumanization is crucial to one’s understanding of the history of the Holocaust.

The Nazis placed such heavy emphasis on the deterioration of one’s dignity and victims were perceptive to this, especially women who, in their testimonies, almost always refer to the way the Nazis forced the women to strip to the nude and expose their bodies in mass quantities. Edith Serras, who was born in Bessarabia, but moved to France in the 1930s, recalled, “we were shoved outdoors naked and barefooted at 3 o’clock and had to stand in fives and fives.”68 This

66 Lemkin, p.79.
68 Serras.
was a common punishment for victims, oftentimes with no obvious purpose. The method of forcing women to reveal their bodies, an act that was considered appropriate only for private spaces, was an exercise of Nazi dominance over their victims and diminished their victims to the most helpless versions of themselves. The act of being in the nude can be seen as a parallel to being a new-born baby, born in nakedness. In the Torah and the Christian old testament, Adam and Eve are depicted as naked before learning of shame. These historic instances of innocence and then shame associated with nudity and enforced by Nazis serve to diminish victims to the most primitive forms of themselves, to reduce their dignity and self-worth. Another survivor, Lily Mazur Margules from Lithuania, described another instance of forced nudity:

They told us right away to line up and get undressed. Naked. Oh and you know, one, you are only a person as soon, as long as you have your clothes on. You can be a professor, you can be a doctor, you can be a scientist, you can be a shoemaker, but as long, as soon as your clothes come up and you stand naked, you are lost. You are not a human anymore...the Germans that they, they took off our, systematically... took away our dignity by undressing us. Many of the girls were young girls. They were virgins. They never saw their parents naked, never saw their mothers naked, but all of a sudden... we have to go and get undressed.69

Lily perfectly understands the function of Nazis forcing their victims to stand naked, and she further understands the ways in which dehumanization functions to diminish each victim to the same subhuman status. She expresses the disregard for one’s education, profession, or socioeconomic status; in genocide all that perpetrators see is the enemy.

Dehumanization is defined more broadly than overt, physical acts of abuse, and largely functions on a psychological level. Hélène Berr wrote of her experience of dehumanization constantly in Paris. Though she did not know dehumanization by this name, she felt it

manifesting within herself: “I am fed up with feeling I do not have the right to be as I was. It seems that I have become attached to something invisible and that I cannot move away from it as I wish to, and it makes me hate this thing, and deform it.”\textsuperscript{70} The “thing,” here Hélène is referring to, is the feeling she is experiencing as a result of the various changes she was encountering in her life, including uncertainty around her future as a scholar, as well as emerging restrictions placed on Jews each day. When the Jews of Northern France were forced to begin wearing the Yellow Star of David, as an outward marker of their Jewish identities, Hélène wrote: “I was determined not to wear it. I considered it degrading to do so, proof of one’s submission to the German laws….Those are the two sides of how life is now: youth, beauty and freshness, all contained in this limpid morning; barbarity and evil, represented by this yellow star.”\textsuperscript{71} The law requiring Jews to wear the Star of David is today classified under symbolization in the stages of genocide. As symbolization functions as a precedent for dehumanization, Berr was hyper-aware of its role in genocide and appears almost fixated on it in her journal entries. She mentions it twice more in later pages, noting the response non-Jews have to it, and referring to it as a “crucifixion for me….It was as if my forehead had been seared by a branding iron.”\textsuperscript{72} In this instance, Berr is perfectly connecting what the Nazis are doing to Jews, to the treatment of animals. The mention of a “branding iron” inevitably makes one think of cattle and the method of branding cattle as a means of keeping track of them; the same can be said for Jews in twentieth century Nazi Europe. This act of branding is exacerbated through the tattooing of prisoners in Auschwitz, that will come later with the development of Nazi concentration and death camps. It is further important to briefly mention Hélène’s note of how the French are

\textsuperscript{70} Berr, p.19.  
\textsuperscript{71} Berr, pp.50-51.  
\textsuperscript{72} Berr, p.56.
receiving these new Nazi policies, “I realize that it offends other people.”\textsuperscript{73} She is aware of how her fellow Frenchmen are perceiving her, because of the closeness she possesses to her French identity. This is similar to the earlier mentioned quote from Kapp Hartz, regarding her self-identification as French first and Jewish second; to Hélène she was not just Jewish, she was also French. This point especially highlights how Nazi policies were intended to divide countrymen and turn gentiles on their Jewish neighbors, regardless of how long they may have lived in harmony. An excellent example of this form of dehumanization is the Nuremberg Laws.

The Nuremberg Laws, passed in 1935, most notably established who was and was not to be considered Jewish. However, it included two additional policies which further ostracized Jews among their countrymen. The Nuremberg Laws forbade Jews from flying the German flag, and it stripped German Jews of their citizenship. While it is necessary to understand the importance of the Nuremberg Laws in establishing legal definitions of Jewish identity, the latter two policies are crucial in understanding the gradual implementation of dehumanizing laws into daily life. To prevent Jews from flying the German flag infringes on a German citizen's right to demonstrate their patriotism. Adolf Hitler insisted that Jews were threats to the German national state, to the German people, and the success of the so-called Aryan race. Thus if Jews are not allowed to demonstrate any form of patriotism that is associated with an act like flying one’s national flag, then perhaps they will more readily be perceived as unpatriotic and thus threatening.

Furthermore, to take away one’s citizenship is to take away the protections one is afforded through citizenship under national law. Without citizenship Jews had no country which held a duty to protect them; Jews struggled to be issued the necessary documents for travel both domestically and abroad, they were effectively undocumented. This aspect of the Nuremberg

\textsuperscript{73} Berr, p.56.
Laws relieved German citizens of the duty of protecting their Jewish neighbors, because they were no longer brothers under one nation, Jews were now legally ‘other,’ and this became the case more so than ever before. The Nuremberg Laws repudiated all Jews in order to create greater distance between Jews and gentiles, enabling bystanders to become collaborators and collaborators to become perpetrators. Consequently, the Nazis would not encounter as much opposition as was possible, because they had deformed Jews into a national enemy.

Evidence that Jews experienced a unique form of dehumanization lies within the history of the Nazi party. Reichskulturwalter, or Reich Culture Manager\textsuperscript{74}, Hans Hinkel worked at the Ministry of Propaganda under Hitler and, “his primary goal was to rid German culture of Jewish influences.”\textsuperscript{75} Emphasis on destruction of culture in addition to physical people, a unique aspect of Jewish persecution, was introduced in pre-war Germany and brought into France with the occupation. Further, as Hélène Berr wrote, “[the Nazis] want to make their victims despicable, not arouse admiration for them.”\textsuperscript{76} While it is true that Nazis dehumanized all of their victims, especially those deemed unworthy to society, the dehumanization of Jews was unique because of the extent to which Nazis perceived Jews as the ultimate threat or problem. Betty Lauer remembered, “The Nazis, after the liquidations of the ghetto, they were literally hunting Jews, because it was their motto that not one Jew may survive”.\textsuperscript{77} While the principles of fascism call for the eradication of all other political parties, it was Jews who were tied to communism through antisemitic tropes, especially older antisemitic rhetoric as such is found in the notoriously anti-Jewish, \textit{Protocols of the Elders of Zion}. Perhaps this is why some communists supported

\textsuperscript{75} Rovit, p.468.
\textsuperscript{76} Berr, p.87.
\textsuperscript{77} Lauer, 02:47 – 03:00.
measures against Jews, like in the case of communist approval of the seizure of Maurice de Rothschild’s property.\textsuperscript{78} Such communists accused Jews of being capitalist conspirators, a theme consistent with historical antisemitism. In France antisemitism existed to a lesser extent though it nonetheless persisted. Zuccotti stated that the internationally public, “Catholic press… joined Vichy publications in the unoccupied zone and the antisemitic collaborationist press of the occupied zone in endorsing measures against the Jews.”\textsuperscript{79} However she goes on to list several French citizens who condemned Nazi antisemitism and sought to provide aid to France’s Jews, including the archbishop of Lyon, Pierre Cardinal Gerlier.\textsuperscript{80} While French citizens may not have been the primary perpetrators of dehumanization of Jews, French Jews were subjected to it all the same.

While dehumanization was an aspect of perpetrator torture and abuse, it remains in Holocaust history as an atrocity which victims deeply internalized, resulting in what can be considered a form of self-dehumanization. Examples of this are evident in survivor testimony and in the presence of choiceless-choices in the history of genocide. “Choiceless-choices” are the decisions victims make when a genocide is being perpetrated against them and the victims are faced with various options, none of which are truly good or viable, none of which a person would ordinarily choose, and none of which is guaranteed to be “right”. An example of this is illustrated by Doris Bergen, through an anecdote from Holocaust survivor, Henry Friedman, whose mother was to give birth to a newborn baby, who would then be murdered, per the demand of other Jews with whom they were hiding.\textsuperscript{81} Friedman’s mother was forced to make this decision under the pressure of those she was with in order to save their lives. Bergen

\textsuperscript{78} Zuccotti, p.139.
\textsuperscript{79} Zuccotti, p.138.
\textsuperscript{80} Zuccotti, pp. 139 – 140.
\textsuperscript{81} Bergen, p.263.
describes this as an instance of collaboration with Nazism, writing, “in circumstances saturated in violence, collaboration was ubiquitous, intermingled with greed, brutality, and sometimes heroism.” While Bergen successfully identifies the numerous emotions and circumstantial consequences of genocide and of the Holocaust more specifically, she fails to acknowledge this particular testimonial as a choiceless-choice. Friedman’s mother did not want to murder her baby, and it is almost certain that the people with whom she was hiding did not want to kill this child and would have ordinarily never made the decision to do so, but in the instance of genocide, one’s own survival is almost always the premier concern and ultimately drives all actions. Nonetheless, choiceless-choices lead to self-inflicted dehumanization, which in itself is a choiceless choice.

Further, survivor testimony offers numerous, incredible instances of self-dehumanization or examples of victims relinquishing their minds to the status genocide has inflicted upon them. Victim testimonies offer numerous instances of women referring to themselves or others as anything besides people. Micheline Maurel wrote, “near those hooks lurked creatures like vultures around the gallows, waiting to steal whatever they could.” Here the “creatures” are Maurel's fellow prisoners, whom she no longer views as people because of the insensitive and inhumane ways in which they treat corpses, that is, as though they are treasure troves waiting to be looted. This is similar to the way in which French survivor Charlotte Delbo experiences the struggle of a fellow prisoner: “Once fallen, it lost its wasted look, it softened, becoming once again something living and pitiable. The elbow props itself up, slips. The whole body slumps.” The prisoner Delbo is watching in this instance had fallen into a snowy embankment in her

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82 Bergen, p.263.
83 Maurel, p.36.
84 Delbo, p.29.
attempt to satiate her thirst from typhoid fever and was attempting at climbing out to join the group who was standing at the appelle. Now, whether or not Delbo describes this scene in this way in an attempt to shield herself from the pain associated with witnessing the struggle of her fellow prisoner, or as a demonstration of the degree to which she no longer viewed herself or the women she was imprisoned with, as humans, is ultimately debatable. What is clear however, are the ways in which Delbo’s word choice, clearly demonstrates dehumanization, whether or not it was Nazi inflicted or otherwise. Delbo uses “it” to describe the woman and out of context one might be confused about that to which she is referring. She says “the body” and “the elbow,” as though neither of the two belong to any single person, but exist as parts of a body; but the person who possesses this body is not worthy of mentioning. What Delbo illuminates is the ways in which Nazis and other perpetrators, perceived victims, not as people but as things that resemble people.

Another example from Maurel is one in which she has adopted the language of the camp commanders: “And so this Schweinehund dragged herself panting to Block 3, painfully climbed the steps and was hoping to reach her bunk to rest for a little while.” In this statement, not only has Maurel taken to referring to herself by a derogatory German word “swine-hound”, but she is recollecting a memory in the third person. Let us consider this statement in conjunction with another, from Delbo: “It was a cold and dry winter day. One of those winter days when people say it would be nice to take a walk. People. Elsewhere,” Both of these statements are examples of what scholar, Margaret Anne-Hutton describes as “dissociating from a previous self.”

Hutton’s interpretation of the role of identity is largely drawn from the work of Lawrence L.

85 Maurel, p.67.
86 Delbo, p.56.
Langer, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub on a victim’s response to trauma and the consequent methods they use to deal with the trauma. We can glean a clear separation from the self from Maurel’s and Delbo’s memories. It is as if the only way the women can bear the conditions they are subjected to, is to proceed as though they are not the same person who used to have a life full of joy and love and freedom. In turn this disassociation becomes dehumanization because although it is now a means of coping, it is nonetheless in agreement with Nazi beliefs. Maurel offers further insight into the ways victims dissociated, coped, and attempted to survive, writing, “little by little our minds blurred. To speak was out of the question, to think equally so,” thus demonstrating the effects of the genocide on the mind and the victim’s behavior. She went on to distinguish herself from new arrivals and non-Jewish prisoners:

> It was hard for them [new Polish arrivals] as human beings… The beatings of these women [non-Jewish, Czech women] was very different from that of the women in Block 3; even their expression was different. They weren’t any less unhappy than the rest of us, but because they were less hungry, they may have felt the exile more keenly, the separation, the slavery and all those human sorrows that I had already put behind me. [my emphasis]

Here Maurel is demonstrating not only the distance she feels from her former self, but from her fellow prisoners who have yet to be degraded to the same degree she had been. Her starvation, her physical abuse, the demanding physical labor she was forced to endure, the mental and emotional turmoil she suffered from her forced separation from her family, worked to dehumanize her to the point where she no longer felt capable of experiencing ordinary human emotion; she was no longer living an ordinary life. Edith Serras echoes these feelings of loss in her statement, “In twenty-four hours we were converted into beasts.” The feeling that one has

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88 Maurel, p.71.
89 Maurel, p.88, 97.
90 Serras.
lost control over one’s life was both sudden and gradual; Hélène Berr wrote, “suddenly I realize that there is nothing to hope for and everything to fear in the days to come and beyond.”91 In this instance, Berr is writing prior to her deportation and yet feels the effects of the coming genocide. For Delbo, the feeling of one’s impending death is lingering, and hovers above her every moment and colors her view of the world: “All arguments are senseless. I am at odds with my reason. One is at odd with all reason.”92 What these women reflect in their testimonies is the impact of dehumanization over time, even as they are experiencing it. Dehumanization is intended to ease the murder and debasement of the victims, to reduce any friction the perpetrators may encounter; for the victims, however, dehumanization functions to convince victims that they are deserving of their fate (death) and that there is ultimately no way to evade this.

While death may have presented itself as inescapable, what was additionally bound to victims was the identities with which they were born. We can refer to examples of what I will call, “identity-reminders” as evidence to support that maintaining one’s identity was in fact an act of resistance that was a direct response to dehumanization. Ruth Kapp Hartz, in a conversation with her older cousin, Jeanette, recalls being told, “Whatever happens… remember that you are Jewish. Do not speak of it to anyone, but never forget it. Be proud of it, as Queen Esther was.”93 Jeanette is emphasizing the necessity for Ruth to remember and revere her Jewish identity, because of the murderous lengths the Nazis pursued to ensure the total annihilation of all Jewish life. Early in the passage mentioned above, Ruth admits to wishing she could forget

91 Berr, p.132. It should also be noted here that Hélène Berr would be murdered in a concentration camp, and there are indications in her journal that perhaps she suspected her fate. For more see, The Journal of Hélène Berr.
92 Delbo, p.18.
93 Cretzmeyer, p.126.
being Jewish and going so far as to say, “Jewish people got into trouble and were taken away. If Haman had tried to get rid of the Jews, and now the Nazis under Hitler, had the same intention, there must be something terribly wrong with being Jewish.”94 While in this particular instance Ruth is speaking from a child’s perspective, she nonetheless is reflecting a sentiment that is a side effect of the persecution which she is suffering. Ruth, much like many other unsuspecting victims, was not able to comprehend the reason why Jews were so cruelly sought after, not just by the Nazis but in centuries prior. This point highlights two things: the first, is that the Nazis persecution of their victims worked so brutally that it indeed penetrated the minds of their victims; the second, is that the Nazis exacerbated previous antisemitic sentiment in Europe and were able to enact dehumanization and genocide (of Jews in particular) on the largest scale ever before seen by the world. Similar to Ruth’s feeling that, “there must be something terribly wrong with being Jewish,” was the perception of non-Jewish Europeans who were witnessing the Nazi atrocities and perhaps justifying it by reminding themselves of the long history of anti-Jewish sentiment. Maurel alludes to this in her statement about a memory from when she was imprisoned at Neubrandenburg concentration camp, “The people we met on the road seemed to consider it perfectly natural to see a line of gaunt women carrying piles of bricks on Sunday.”95 Maurel is demonstrating the degree to which the public had become desensitized to the atrocities, which in turn exemplifies an additional effect of dehumanization on French bystanders.

The various ways in which victims coped with dehumanization bear further scrutiny. One way, as previously mentioned, was dissociation from one’s self; another was writing. For victims like Hélène Berr, the pen seemed to be the only defense against Nazi evil. She wrote, “I’m not even keeping this diary anymore, I’ve no willpower left. I’m just putting down the

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94 Cretzmeyer, p.126.
95 Maurel, pp.41-42.
salient facts so as to remember them.”96 This notion of keeping written accounts of contemporaneous events was common for victims. A particularly famous case of this is the Ringelblum Archive, a collection of written works facilitated by historian Emmanuel Ringelblum in the Warsaw Ghetto. Ringelblum and his family were eventually murdered, but his cohort of writers were able to secure three caches of written works underground that have now been discovered and are widely used in historical research. What is perhaps most remarkable about this particular archive, was Ringelblum’s acute sense of awareness to the urgency with which Jews needed to document Nazi atrocities. Ringelblum encouraged such documentation, despite all indications (at the time) that the Nazis would win the war and succeed in their plan of complete Jewish erasure. Like Ringelblum, Berr saw the greater cause at stake. This did not mean however that she was exempt from normal responses to the dehumanization she increasingly encountered. Berr wrote, “Someone threw a glass of water at me from the hotel on the other side of the street.”97 This sentence lies in the middle of a passage in which she is writing about her day. It is particularly striking because it does not seem to fit in the paragraph, though the casual tone implies that perhaps she was not all that bothered by the act, as she had come to expect this sort of thing while out in public. This nonchalance is indicative of the normalization of dehumanization of Jews and other victim groups, as she does not mention any example of someone defending her or even of an attempt to defend herself. She responds with acceptance, a terrifying indication that dehumanization and genocide were functioning properly.

Dehumanization is so crucial to one’s understanding of genocide because it answers the ‘how, question of the Holocaust. One often hears, “how could they have let this happen?” with the “they” referring to both the victims and the bystanders. The answer to this question lies

96 Berr, p.127.
97 Berr, p.41.
within dehumanization. As I have outlined above, dehumanization functions to convince both bystander and victim of the murderous cause, decreasing opposition, diminishing morale and essentially creating the necessary conditions to perpetrate a genocide. It is hence crucial to analyze examples of victim interpretations of dehumanization, in order to better understand how dehumanization functions in genocide. Resistance is born out of a response to dehumanization and atrocity and learning about both in tandem demonstrates how victims experienced their own victimization and responded to it. What an analysis of dehumanization further provides, is the ability to more aptly discern overt, covert, conscious, and subconscious acts of resistance. Together, both resistance and dehumanization contribute to a more holistic understanding of the Holocaust and genocide.

V. Resistance as it Exists in Relation to Dehumanization:

Acts of resistance were also reactive to genocidal and dehumanizing acts. “Resistance” is not limited to only overt acts which directly resist the genocidal goals (i.e. murder), but also includes acts which defy the various tools which genocide employs, such as debasement of victims. Historian Brana Gurewitsch defines resistance as, “any act or course of action taken between 1933 and May 8, 1945 that directly defied Nazi laws, policies and ideology that endangered the lives of those who engaged in such action.”98 I will pay special attention to the inclusion of ‘defying Nazi ideology’ as resistance. Nazi ideology dictated that all Jews were inherently evil, that Jews were the natural enemy of the ‘Aryan’ people, and that all Jews needed to be eradicated, along with Communists, Socialist, Social-Democrats, Capitalists, homosexuals, Roma, Sinti, people with disabilities, Jehovah’s witnesses, Slavic people, people of African

descent, and many more. Nazi ideology and plans for genocide called for the dehumanization of
the aforementioned victims, in order to subdue, and murder them. In accordance with
Gurewitsch’s definition of resistance, I will discuss the following forms of resistance, to
demonstrate the variety of resistance that existed as a direct result of the various victim
interpretations of dehumanization: overt acts of resistance; covert acts of resistance - such as
resistance to primitive instincts and solidarity among victims and the use of culture as a form of
resistance, through the unifying power of language, a sense of national pride, and especially the
use of art and various cultural traditions. This chapter will specifically emphasize culture as
resistance to illustrate the ways the destruction of culture is an incredibly prevalent aspect of
dehumanization and genocide.

Overt acts of resistance are the actions and behaviors with which one typically associates
most immediately, with resistance. An example comes from Micheline Maurel, where she writes:

I would...go by the bins where all the little springs we had soldered during the day
were stored… I would pick up a handful, sometimes two for we were not searched.
Along the road, when the officerines were not looking, I would throw the springs with all
my strength into the weeds… I was much happier, for those at least would never see
service.99

What Maurel is describing here is an example of sabotage as a form of resistance, which is an
overt act which many survivors recall taking part in. A similar form of overt resistance is, as
Doris Bergen asserts, the dissemination of information.100 One such example is illustrated in a
memory belonging to Ruth Kapp Hartz, where her 16-year-old cousin, Jeanette has just arrived
home:

Maybe… [Jeanette] came home early to help her boyfriend print pamphlets. She
does this sometimes, but it’s a secret. Jeanette’s boyfriend and several others from the

99 Maurel, p.35-36.  
100 Bergen, p.264.
While the physical spread of information, that is the printing of leaflets or pamphlets, was not the only way people could resist through sharing information, it exists here as an overt act. Overt acts of resistance are further unique because at the outset of Nazi rule, some forms were permitted, though they were not referred to as such. For example, in Paris, Hélène Berr worked with the *Union Générales des Israélites des Frances*, or the UGIF, to help take care of Jewish children who had no families or whose families had been displaced. While Hélène worked for the UGIF legally and publicly, she nonetheless took part in a form of resistance both in that she was upholding Jewish solidarity, but that she was also working to help Jews, which directly conflicted with Nazi ideology.

Breaching the threshold of identifying resistance through acts which oppose Nazism, critics might say, risks diminishing the value of resistance; for it suggests that if everything is resistance then, perhaps nothing is. However in my assessment such is not the case. It is necessary to consider Nazi ideology when attempting to discern forms of resistance, because in the case of the Holocaust, ideology inspired action. Furthermore, subconscious acts of resistance must also be considered when assessing resistance, because it is impossible to know the true intentions of a victim in the very moment something happened unless they wrote it down. As history has shown, memory alone is unfortunately insufficient in providing concrete evidence of feelings and intent that were alive in the past. Testimony must always be examined with this in mind. Therefore, subconscious acts, especially those which could have a direct impact on

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101 Cretzmeyer, p.10.  
102 Berr, p.120.  
103 Ringelheim, p.760.
survival, deserve to be examined with other more obvious forms of resistance, because survival was, in the case of Jews and many of the Nazis’ victims, indeed resistance.

Covert acts of resistance manifest in many ways, though I will be examining two in particular: resistance to primitive instinct, and solidarity. One of the goals of dehumanization, as mentioned in previous chapters, was to debase victims to a subhuman status. Such atrocities resulted in, as Maurel and Delbo recalled, women morphing into bestial versions of themselves who saw corpses not as murdered people, but as the bearers of items which might have increased their chances of survival. Yet, victims were still able to grasp hold of their humanity despite all signs that it was lost. Delbo exemplifies this: “But we look at them [corpses] without fear. We know that this is the limit of what we can bear and we forbid ourselves to let go.” Here Delbo is referring to ‘letting go’ of humanity, of the sense in oneself which tells them that death of another person is sad, and murder is wrong. Delbo is alluding to confrontation of cruelty and death as a means of maintaining her humanity. She is not desensitizing herself to death, rather she is reminding herself of murder, of what it feels like to witness evil done unto people. She is reminding herself that the dead bodies she is staring at were people, therefore they are corpses; she is defying the Nazi practice of referring to prisoners as numbers, ‘pieces,’ or bodies; she is reclaiming personhood for both herself and the dead victims. Small reminders of one’s humanity, sometimes at unexpected moments, also fall into the category of covert resistance. Edith Serras recalled a friend’s husband sharing: “I broke out crying. Today I recognized that I have a human spirit in me like all people.” This man had been working in the gas chambers for weeks since his arrival to the camp, and he had noted

104 Maurel.
105 Delbo.
106 Delbo, p.47.
107 Serras.
earlier on his quick transformation into an animal. Crying reminded him of sadness, a human emotion which was evoked at the sight of dead victims; he was thus reminded of his humanity and perhaps this gave him hope. This particular instance of a woman noticing a man crying is indicative of how some human reactions are not gendered and exist for all people. Thus Serras is reminded of both her humanity and of her friends, despite him being a man.

An additional way victims resisted covertly was through solidarity. Again, an example from Serras demonstrates how women thwarted divisive Nazi efforts and banded together: “We started to organize ourselves… When a woman would get sick in the winter… the healthier women would take off their underwear and give it to the sick one.” Not only did women look out for one another at appelle, as was the case for Serras, but on marches, women additionally supported each other. Maurel provides an example of this, recalling, “Despite the support the Léger sisters gave me, each holding me by an arm, I fell several times,” thus indicating her reliance on others for support and for survival. The two women Maurel mentions here, the “Léger sisters,” were women she had known outside of the camps and were two women with whom she became closely tied to inside the concentration camp of Neubrandenburg. Solidarity merits the title of resistance because of the divisive nature of Nazism, and especially because of the way dehumanization functioned to reduce a person to nothing more than a primal creature whose sole aim became survival.

Solidarity is in its very nature unifying, and during the Holocaust language often served as a unifying factor for many victims. The use of one’s national tongue, especially if it was not German, defied Nazi ideology which deemed German to be the superior language and culture.

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108 Serras.  
109 Serras.  
110 Maurel, p.17.
which is one of the reasons for its dominance within concentration camps. This was such to the extent that many victims came to learn German as a means of survival, to avoid punishments that came from misunderstandings or disobeyed orders. Many victims found a semblance of comfort in concentration camps if they encountered someone from their home country; survivor testimony has revealed that comfort was additionally gained from the use of a shared language in particular. Historian Rose Yalow Kamel wrote of language as a way in which survival became “possible for the French,” emphasizing that survivors who did not have this privilege may have experienced greater turmoil and feelings of being on one’s own.  

Language though, falls under the category of culture as resistance, because language can be unique to geographical areas and ethnic groups. Still, it is nonetheless a form of resistance. Maurel wrote of her fellow French women singing the Marseillaise, despite punishment, in an attempt to bolster morale and maintain French solidarity and support for one another.  

this use of shared experiences and culture became useful in inspiring hope in these French women, thus potentially increasing their will to survive. If we take this to be the case, then the use of one’s national tongue is resistance. Additionally similar to language, is national pride. As noted above, Maurel shares that the passion for France she encountered in the concentration camps contributed to a heightened sense of hope among the women in her block. She further noted:

not one [blokova] had kept her post for any length of time. This was due, I believe to the complete indifference of the French to German discipline or to their commands. It is true that for the most part they actually did not understand the orders given, nor indeed, did they have any wish to understand them.

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112 Maurel, p.42.
113 Maurel, p.63.
This particular statement is rather bold in Maurel’s assertion that the “indifference” of the French prisoners, to Nazi rule, contributed to the reassignment of block leaders, thus challenging the strength of the internal Nazi system. What Maurel posits is that not even Nazi abuse could silence French pride and its consequent contribution to the maintenance of one’s humanity.

Finally, let us consider the use of various art forms and cultural traditions as a means of resisting Nazi dehumanization. Micheline Maurel and Charlotte Delbo have provided excellent sources which prove the use of shared written works and other art forms, as a means of bartering and uplifting prisoners while in concentration camps. For Maurel this took the form of exchanging poems she had written for a favor: “From time to time, someone would ask me for verses to offer as a gift to a friend… In a sense, I was playing the role of a public scribe - a role which evidently filled a need.”¹¹⁴ In her memoir, Maurel exemplifies how the exchange of forbidden luxuries, such as art, truly made a positive impact on prisoners. She went so far as to say that once she began writing for her fellow inmates she had more of a will to eat and continued, “I was writing more freely. The days were not so full of despair. I had something to look forward to.”¹¹⁵ A key component of dehumanization is to strip away the things which make a person human, such as indulgence and participation in the arts. Writing, especially as a form of communication, is a uniquely human characteristic. To write, especially in conditions where to do so could result in death, is resistance to the genocidal Nazi goals. Maurel herself tells us that upon receiving a scrapbook from a friend, in which she could keep her writings, she recognized the risk of possessing it: “Every page, every pencil taken, represented that many acts of sabotage in the eyes of the SS, for which Sissy risked being terribly beaten.”¹¹⁶ Maurel tells the reader that

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¹¹⁴ Maurel, p.85.
¹¹⁵ Maurel, p.97.
¹¹⁶ Maurel, p.78.
she and Sissy, both artists, grew a very close friendship while imprisoned and that the two looked after one another in a way that Maurel came to view as having saved her life. Kamel provides an example of Charlotte Delbo engaging in a similar exchange in the camps. Delbo would memorize passages and recite them to her fellow inmates. Kamel tells us that for Delbo, possession of a physical text was not required and that if one could acquire a book they would commit the text to memory and later use it to barter with another prisoner. This use of art as exchange is indicative of the great value assigned by prisoners to art. Art and culture, within the concentration camps and the Holocaust more broadly, were so highly revered because of their ability to deeply humanize their audience. The purposeful creation of art is yet another uniquely human characteristic and to engage in it may have reminded prisoners that they were someone before they were a prisoner and that even as they fought for survival, they were people still.

However, to claim that art was used entirely to the prisoners’ benefit would be inaccurate. Historian Rebecca Rovit wrote that during the Holocaust art was used both abusively, on behalf of perpetrators and therapeutically, on behalf of victims. For example, Rovit notes many instances in which prisoners were forced to dance even when exhausted, or sing songs for the pleasure of the SS officers guarding them, and in this case art is being used as a form of torture. Though Rovit does credit artists and theatre performers especially with using art as a means of escapism and entertainment for fellow prisoners, writing:

Many performers appear to have been motivated by self-preservation in continuing to practice their trade [art]... they afforded themselves, and sometimes others, a spiritual retreat through theater - an escape from a seemingly unbearable situation; or they viewed performance as a commodity to be traded.

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117 Maurel, p.78.
118 Kamel, p.69.
120 Rovit, p.460.
121 Rovit, p.464.
Rovit is not only reinforcing the notion put forward by Maurel that art indeed was used for morale, but she additionally posits that “self-preservation” was an additional motivating factor. If we return to the earlier discussion on Lemkin and his identification of the destruction of culture as a key component of genocide, it becomes more clear that attempts at preserving art, and Jewish art especially, qualifies as resistance.\textsuperscript{122} Rovit further includes that within the Jewish ghettos, leaders of the community attempted to perpetuate Jewish art culture secretly, both to provide potential solace to victims, but also to ensure that so long as Jews were alive, they would uphold traditions and cultural practices unique to the Jewish community.\textsuperscript{123}

The preservation of art is the preservation of human creation, thought, and identity. Therefore it exists as one of the most crucial forms of resistance and contributes to a greater understanding of dehumanization. If one was to evaluate the eight stages of genocide, in order to discern what forms of resistance are side effects to which, one would find much overlap. Resistance to the branding of Jewish identity through the law which required Jews to wear the Star of David, is resistance to both symbolization and dehumanization. A survivor who shares their experience, is resisting extermination and denial simultaneously. Rovit wrote about theater performances: “Because performance took place under various conditions, we cannot generalize about these contexts, nor can we assert a single reason why an inmate created art under such circumstance.”\textsuperscript{124} Once again this begs the question of whether or not subconscious resistance should be categorized as such, for it risks glorifying choiceless-choices victims were faced with and revering them for selecting an option contemporary historians deem honorable. It is impossible to know all motivations that drove victims to the actions they engaged in, and even

\begin{footnotes}
\item[122] Lemkin, p.147.
\item[123] Rovit, p.464.
\item[124] Rovit, p.467.
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more so for non-victims to pass judgement on victim behavior. Yet, if that action propelled them the slightest bit towards survival, then in some way it is resistance, because it enabled them to achieve the impossible: life.

VI. Conclusion:
Understanding of resistance must be informed by an understanding of dehumanization. The role of dehumanization in a genocide is clearly such that it permeates all components and has lasting effects on victims. Dehumanization has the power to desensitize bystanders to atrocity, as described by Micheline Maurel, and to debase human beings to believe that the only possible escape is death. In this way dehumanization plays a critical role in genocide and to fail to study it neglects an aspect of genocide which can help one more broadly comprehend genocide as a concept. It is the historian’s duty to answer the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ questions; for the Holocaust, many of these questions can be answered through a deconstruction of the stages of genocide.

The dehumanization of women more specifically merits its own research in the same way male experiences and children’s experiences deserve it. I have chosen to emphasize women’s history not because it is more worthy of historical study, but because it offers a unique perspective on victim experience, in the same way that victims from different regions provide insight on experiences particular to only them. I have chosen to study French-resident-victims for the same reason one chooses to study a certain region or ethnic group, that each of these specific histories are critical to developing the most holistic history possible. As such, my research has shown that for French-resident-victims, certain unifying factors like a shared language or cultural background were indeed valued among victims, especially in concentration camps where women may have turned to one another for help and solace. Language in particular was only one form of
resistance victims employed and falls into the resistance category because it directly defies Nazi goals/ideology. Yet it remains true that it is impossible to identify acts of resistance without having identified that which victims are resisting. Historians such as Brana Gurewitsch and Doris Bergen have classified resistance as, “any actions taken with the intent of thwarting Nazi German goals in the war, actions that carried with them the risk of punishment,” thus if the Nazis had a goal of dehumanizing and removing victim’s sense of individuality, then efforts at maintaining one’s humanity and sense of self are inherently acts of resistance.\textsuperscript{125}

It is critical that in genocide studies no one component is neglected or overlooked, as each contributes to the experience of victims. In learning how women victims experienced and interpreted their treatment, we can glean knowledge on how genocide functions, thus informing future generations on how it can best be prevented.

\textsuperscript{125} Bergen, p.263.
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