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Article

Competing for the Youth: Jewish Scout Identity, Religion, and Gender during the Holocaust in France

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Jewish youth identity, gender, and ideology during the Holocaust in France in order to understand how young people responded to persecution. The author's attempts to understand the youth perspective reveals that these adolescents' experiences were distinct and varied, and each traversed complex and multifaceted paths through the war. Always in perpetual negotiation with other elements of their identities—such as their ideology, religion, and gender—for many, youth movements greatly impacted how they developed and matured into adulthood. Coming of age during the Holocaust meant not only enduring persecution, but also traditional discourses on the place of young people in society. Charting the trajectories of individual young people and Jewish youth groups within the context of the war, the Holocaust, and French Jewish history reveals their radicalized and accelerated wartime development. In researching this phenomenon, it becomes possible to decenter entrenched narratives of persecution and resistance and enhance our understanding of wartime gender roles, the impact of Judaism, and the various ideologies that informed these youths' lives.

INTRODUCTION

At the outbreak of the Second World War, there were approximately two thousand members of the Jewish Scouts of France (the *Éclaireurs Israélites de France*, EIF). Following the German invasion and subsequent capitulation of France in June 1940, thousands of Jews fled southward into the unoccupied zone under the newly established collaborationist Vichy regime. Seeking refuge in a new environment, many young Jews joined newly reconstructed EIF groups, and by April 1941, EIF membership in southern France alone had risen to three thousand.[1] This influx of membership, twinned with the pressures of operating in a wartime environment, presented several challenges to the EIF. Jewish youths sought not only the traditional elements of Jewish scouting (camaraderie, spiritual development, and physical exercise), but also meaning in the chaos around them, as well as material aid and assistance for their needs and their families' needs. Because of this, being a Jewish scout during wartime meant that EIF members under Vichy were subject to competing narratives about their youth, had to balance old Jewish and scouting traditions with new demands that arose from the war, and assumed roles and responsibilities that sometimes far surpassed scouting or the typical responsibilities of children and adolescents.

This article explores how young Jews in France responded to these challenges, by analyzing the experiences of five youth movement members. These five individuals—Raymond Winter (b. 1923), Gilbert Bloch (b. 1920), Régine Gattegno (b. 1923), and Sarah (b. 1922) and Jacques (b. 1927) Weltmann—came from a variety of backgrounds and youth movements. Though each had their own journey throughout the war, they were all involved in youth movements including the EIF, the Zionist youth movement *Hashomer Hatzair*, and the Vichy youth movement *Chantiers de la Jeunesse Française.*

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Some of them were longterm members, while others joined in response to war and persecution. Winter, Bloch, and Gattegno were born in France, while the Weltmann siblings were immigrants from Germany, who sought refuge in France before the war. The German invasion forced all of them to move around the country, either for safety concerns or due to their underground work. Their involvement in the latter shows the profound development of youths' responsibilities as they increasingly took part in rescue and resistance activities, revealing how their lives and identities changed as a result of the Holocaust. Of all five of them, only the Weltmann siblings survived the war.

Between thirteen and twenty years of age at the start of the war, their age enabled them to partake in the scouting movement, and also placed them in a "blurred" and "ambiguous" stage between childhood and adulthood.[2] On the cusp of adulthood, this generation entered the war at a time when they were beginning to realize their own agency, and adults around them expected them to take on new responsibilities. This positioned them well to become involved in later resistance and rescue work within the context of their youth movements. This article applies youth as an intersectional category of analysis in order to understand how age influenced their experiences of the war. Treating those within this age range as subjects of a distinct analytical category changes how we think about young people as historical actors, introducing age-based nuance to otherwise uniform categories. Persecution transformed and challenged these categories and the ways young people performed them. Combining personal testimonies with reports, letters, and lists from the EIF, as well as emerging research on the history of childhood, gender, identity, and Judaism in France, this article contributes to our understanding of how the Second World War and, specifically, the Holocaust, shaped the lives, identities, and experiences of these young people.

This study utilized oral and written testimonies drawn mainly from the archives of Yad Vashem, the USC Shoah Foundation, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. While specific details—such as exact dates, people, and places—are often inaccurate due to the fallibility of memory and the time between the events and the interviews, testimonies offer a firsthand perspective of how these events were experienced. As Alessandro Portelli famously argued, oral history testimonies "tell us less about events than about their meaning."[3] Filmed interviews in particular have more broadly contributed to the history of emotions, subjectivity, and meaning,[4] while also providing key insight into how young people perceived their youth. These highly subjective sources are contextualized by reports, letters, newspapers, and other archival documents held at Yad Vashem and in the Archives of the World Jewish Relief, as well as additional sources from the youth movements. Finally, cross-archival research allows this work to feature the stories of young people who did not survive, many of which can only be reconstructed by combining testimonies, reports, lists, and postwar military citations from different archives.[5]

By developing youth as a category of analysis, this article first reveals how young Jews in France assumed new roles and responsibilities within longterm group histories. It also constructs a framework for understanding how different categories of analysis—including gender and ideology—interacted with youth to form identities that intersected with the histories of resistance, Judaism, and France. Second, it examines young people's initial responses to the shock of persecution brought about by the German invasion, outlining how youth groups struggled to maintain their activities in a changing world. Third, this article turns to the youths' transition to underground work, specifically rescue and resistance, and how these activities impacted their identities and challenged simplistic narratives of resistance. By placing individual people at the forefront, it gives voice to the subjective human stories of the Holocaust.

THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF YOUTH: RESISTANCE, JUDAISM, AND FRANCE

Young people's lives during the Holocaust were interrupted by persecution and were thus ever changing, multifaceted, and often prematurely adult.[6] Indeed, pioneering historian on children during the Holocaust, Debórah Dwork, wrote that children experienced persecution as "autonomous human

beings," each responding in their own unique way.[7] Since Dwork's landmark research, further investigation into young people during the Holocaust (specifically in France) has emerged. Some, like historian Ronald Rosbottom, have argued that young members of the resistance in France experienced a "rapid psychological maturation" as they were propelled into adult roles.[8] Others, like historian Daniel Lee, focused instead on how young people and youth institutions interacted with the Vichy regime, showing how Vichy policies on youth enabled, and even funded and encouraged, EIF scouting activities toward the beginning of the war.[9] These seemingly contradictory interpretations show the complexity of young people's place within wartime society; they were, simultaneously, youthful and adult. Similarly, a recent research project led by Lindsey Dodd and Laura King, *Agents of Future Promise*, investigated "how, why and with what effects children have been ideologically used in modern British and French history."[10] Concluding the project, Dodd and King presented two aspects of youth: a bottom-up "progressive understanding of citizenship" in which young people are "active citizens," able to contribute to society in their own way, and, conversely, a perception of youth as "adults-in-waiting" or "future citizens."[11] This echoes much of the historiography on age as a category of analysis, pioneered by such scholars as Mark Bennett and Mary Jo Maynes, who highlight the socially constructed nature of youth, questioning the impact of these constructions on historical research.[12]

This article builds on these works, recognizing the role of youth within multiple contexts and competing ideologies. Positioning youth as a category of analysis will further historiographical evolution by linking age with previously unimagined transformations in virtually all aspects of young people's lives brought about by persecution. Furthermore, by constantly questioning how age impacted young people's roles and identities, it will chart their maturation and explore how they interacted with both persecution and historic discourses on the place of young people in society.

As scouting activities engaged increasingly with resistance activities, understanding youth is essential for understanding resistance. Indeed, young Jews' involvement changed the nature of resistance: for many young Jews, resistance was a survival strategy, not an active choice. Recently, historians have proposed a variety of different perspectives on resistance. Bob Moore, for example, examines the range of Jewish self-help and rescue activities in western Europe that sought to aid Jews suffering from persecution.[13] Similarly, Joanna Michlic analyzes Jewish mutual aid in Poland, adding the category of youth to reveal different types of solidarity.[14] Finally, Paul Batrop and Samantha Lakin's book on women's role in rescue presents the gendered roles of women in the underground.[15] These studies represent a developing body of literature that incorporates narratives of rescue and acts of everyday defiance and explores more specific categories of people involved in resistance. Each of these elements was relevant for young Jews in the youth movements in France and played a part in forming their experiences.

These studies, however, have not explored the intersectionality of youth with other categories of analysis. Age, in fact, acts as a vector to combine different categories and histories, as age reshaped what it meant to be male or female, left or right, Jewish or gentile. It was from a diversity of backgrounds that Jewish youth approached the challenges of life as a Jewish scout during the Holocaust. Young Jews contended with the demands of society, resistance (and survival), everyday life, and the appropriate place of young people in the community. Combining old with new, they forged their identities as they responded to life under persecution.

Though young people came of age in the shadow of the war, they did so with an understanding and within the expectations of French Jewish traditions. The French Revolution of 1789 and the awarding of citizenship to Jews which followed acted as a kind of origin myth for French Jewry.[16] In the decades that followed, many French Jews identified as both "French" and "Jewish,"[17] and the "inclusionary republican" state enabled them to practice both their religion and their republican loyalty simultaneously.[18] The establishment of youth movements, the rise of Zionism, and foreign immigration into France in the early twentieth century diversified French Jewry, but did not threaten this fundamental identity. Although some youth movements rejected the assimilationist model in favor of an emancipatory one, they often still affirmed their loyalty to France.[19] In fact, it was often through Jewish youth group activities that young French Jews found their place in local society.[20] Conversely, young Jews also drew on secular French ideas as well as religion when forming their own Jewish identities.[21] In a decades-long dialectic, therefore, Jewish youth and their movements were both influenced by and contributed

to historical discourses on Judaism in France. Young Jews thus incorporated this understanding of assimilation, French identity, and Judaism within their own identities as adolescents.

In the interwar years, national and religious youth movements helped to shape youth identity. The EIF, for example, formed part of the broader scouting movement in France, with its own representatives at national scouting meetings. Jewish scouting often equaled Catholic, Protestant, and other youth groups. When the war began, the Vichy regime blamed an ineffective youth for French losses and aimed to reinvigorate them with a new national morality, culture, and identity.[22] This so-called "national revolution" often echoed many of the values and practices that French youth movements held dear.[23] One of its major projects was a "return to the land," encouraging agricultural values and skills, as well as physical strength. This dovetailed to a certain extent with the aims of the Jewish scouts and Jewish youth groups more broadly, thus creating a complex situation in which Vichy promoted anti-Jewish racial laws while also supporting the common agricultural ideology of these Jewish youth movements.[24]

This article explores the experiences of young people from two of the main Jewish youth movements: the non-denominational EIF, and the Zionist *Hashomer Hatzair*, and also explores the activities of a third Jewish youth group, the Orthodox *Yechouroun*. Together, these three groups represent a broad spectrum of Jewish youth in interwar and wartime France. Many of their activities were similar and groups sometimes cooperated with each other, especially in the wartime period when movements worked together on rescue operations. All three created physical spaces for their young people to meet and practice their activities, although the nature and extent of these activities was often different. The EIF was by far the most established and was integrated into French society across the country, with its origins in Paris in 1923. As a group with a national infrastructure, the EIF, of the three, attempted to engage with the new Vichy regime the most even while other Jewish youth groups rejected the government.[25] By contrast, *Hashomer Hatzair* originated in the Polish province of Galicia in the years preceding the First World War, but quickly spread across Europe. A Marxist-Zionist youth movement, it merged scouting and educational groups, adopting the name *Hashomer Hatzair* (Hebrew for "young watchman"). Its first publication was in Vienna in 1917, where it issued a guide for groups in which it stressed the importance of *Aliyah*—emigration to the British mandate of Palestine.[26] During the Holocaust, *Hashomer Hatzair* members took part in resistance activities across Europe including the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.[27] Finally, the *Yechouroun* was a smaller group, originally based around Strasbourg. Relocated to the south of France following the invasion, the *Yechouroun* rejected ideas of working with Vichy, instead pursuing a new cultural awakening for Jewish youth focused around spirituality and learning.[28] Young Jews from across France turned to these three groups, among others, during the war. By tracing the lives of their members, the following sections explore how these groups evolved during the war and shaped the identities of a generation of French Jewish youth.

THE OLD AND THE NEW: INITIAL RESPONSES TO PERSECUTION

At the beginning of the war, seventeen-year-old Raymond Winter was evacuated with his family from Strasbourg to Montpellier.[29] Active in the Strasbourg EIF, he soon established a group in Montpellier, leading it with the help of Rabbi Henri Schilli, one of the EIF's founders. There, Winter arranged religious education and social activities for Jewish youth and worked with the *Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants* (Jewish Children's Aid Society, OSE) organizing holiday homes for children in their care. He became progressively engaged with underground work, forging documents and hiding children. In June 1944, he was arrested and shot after attempting to contact the *Maquis* (rural guerilla fighters in southern France).[30]

Unlike Winter, Gilbert Bloch, aged twenty, was not heavily involved in any Jewish organizations and had grown up in an assimilated family. He was first mobilized in the French army, then drafted as an officer in the *Chantiers de la Jeunesse Française* (French Youth Project, CJF), the Vichy youth organization. Bloch served there until 1942, when he was expelled because he was Jewish. He joined the EIF at their rural training camp in Lautrec, southern France, where he excelled, and in January 1943, became its chief, running the place with organization and command befitting what one of his contemporaries described as his "noble character."[31] It was also at Lautrec that Bloch explored his Jewish

identity, attending religious classes and meditating on the Torah. Toward the end of the war, he became a leader of the EIF's armed wing and was killed in battle in August 1944.

Originating from very different starting points, Winter's and Bloch's trajectories converged around common themes that characterized young Jews' experiences at the beginning of the war in France. In the first two years of the war, they both sought to continue their prewar lives, seeking out or creating similar communities as before. Despite this continuity, both were forced to create new spaces, working in new geographies in response to antisemitic restrictions. Exploring both old and new elements of their identities, their interactions with young people from across France shaped their experiences. As the war intensified, they balanced legal and underground activities, culminating in outright armed resistance. Consequently, both individuals possessed multifaceted and layered identities, whose responsibilities rapidly evolved during wartime. These individual histories reflect the wider, organized Jewish youth experience in France. Although these youths' identities and subjectivities were rooted in prewar ideas, they were influenced by new events. Legally or otherwise, therefore, youths during the first two years of the war generally focused on maintaining their prewar identities by attempting to carry on as normal.

Winter's and Bloch's experiences highlight the need for an alternative chronology that recognizes how young people's prewar experiences and ideologies framed their approach to the war. Indeed, in a direct extension of prewar activities, many Jewish youth movements established rural training centers. These continued the tradition of Zionist training centers, known as *hachsharot* that had sprung up across Europe in the 1930s.[32] Zionists were not the only group to set up *hachsharot*: the EIF established multiple rural training centers and the *Yechouroun* established and ran summer training camps in Howald throughout the 1930s.[33] After the war broke out, many *Yechouroun* members fled into the southern zone, establishing "camps for agricultural preparation for Palestine" and supporting an EIF center at Moissac, near Toulouse, for religious courses and book study.[34] A similar picture emerged at other EIF centers. Established in November 1940, Lautrec, for example, was a farm where Jewish youth developed agricultural, intellectual, and artisanal skills. A November 1941 report described an intense schedule of seventeen-hour days in the summer and fifteen-hour days in the winter, filled with gymnastics, farming, religious classes, and other activities including a choir and dramatic arts.[35] Mirroring youth group activities of the 1930s, many of these experiences clearly originated in a prewar tradition of *hachsharah.* Profoundly religious and land-based practices, largely rooted in *kibbutz* ideas, thus reveal how prewar perceptions of Jewish life continued in the early years of hostilities.

Many youth movements maintained their central characteristics at the beginning of the war. As Bloch's story shows, religious study was central and sometimes even intensified during persecution: it was almost impossible to take part in a Jewish youth organization without a religious element.[36] Before the war, the EIF regularly ran Torah study groups and celebrated Jewish festivals.[37] Later, at Lautrec, EIF spiritual leader Léo Cohn convened religious education classes and dedicated the Sabbath to "spiritual training" where youth studied the Torah and attended choir.[38] In fact, when Bloch arrived at Lautrec, it was Cohn who would coach him through the awakening of his Jewish identity.[39] Similarly, members of the *Yechouroun* met regularly to discuss the Torah and other religious topics, perceiving their role to be that of a "religious educator."[40] Both before and during the war, religious study was paramount for many Jewish youth movements. Crucially, however, there was no unifying religious ideology. In November 1941, for example, 20 percent of the training camp had not previously been members of the EIF.[41] As antisemitic persecution pushed Jewish identities onto those who did not necessarily identify as such, war brought new people into the fold of the Jewish youth movements, seeking help and community in new places.[42] Furthermore, leaders' views and local practices on religious education differed wildly.[43] Notwithstanding these subtleties, religious education clearly played a central, but flexible role in training centers. Experiencing and developing religion thus unified youth irrespective of their ideology.

In fact, youth and religion were deeply intertwined, as Jewish organizations of all ideological persuasions invested in the next generation as the future of Judaism. In 1941, one youth group director argued that setting up a Jewish school was "indispensable" to continue the "sacred instruction" of teaching children.[44] Similarly, when EIF leaders discussed religious education in 1942, they recognized how the movement "already constitutes an excellent instrument for religious propaganda."[45] Indeed, EIF

members would often sing songs, sometimes religious ones, while traveling on long journeys or as part of choirs at the rural training centers.[46] Furthermore, at Moissac, a center shared by the EIF, Zionists, and *Yechouroun*, they established a library for borrowing and reading religious books.[47] The religious education of Jewish youth was particularly important for Orthodox movements, for whom any lack of religious instruction was "painful."[48] By stressing the importance of religious education, movement leaders positioned youth as carriers of religion into an uncertain future. While the religious ideologies were not unified and varied strongly between orthodox, liberal, or Zionist groups, all were united by weaving religion into their activities and perceiving young people as valuable inheritors of their religion.

In addition to religion, many groups also sought to shape gender roles. Youth movement leaders integrated gender ideals into activities. At Lautrec, for example, male and female scouts took part in vastly different activities, while males were working in the fields, female members were "cooking, cleaning, washing and linen changing."[49] Yet leaders' prescribed expectations could vary depending on the organization. Reports from the EIF's Viarose center, for example, differ starkly from those of Lautrec. In September 1941, Viarose leaders wrote that they hoped "each of the young men and women who take part will be simultaneously serious agriculturalists and responsible scouts, capable of directing and leading new rural groups."[50] At Viarose, therefore, scouts had a much less gendered experience. Moreover, there was a significant difference between how young people were perceived by their leaders and how they actually behaved. On the one hand, young people were viewed as a canvas for the traditional gendered beliefs of their leaders, and on the other, youths often went against these expectations. Challenging traditional gender roles, in many respects, was as important as ascribing to them. Lists of EIF groups detailed fourteen women "*directrice*" (directors) at major centers like Strasbourg, Gurs, and Moissac.[51] Gender roles within the EIF training centers were, therefore, simultaneously well defined, but also evolving.

Viewed together, gender and youth combined with religious and pedagogical aspects of life, forming a multifaceted worldview and identity. Young Jews lived these complexities within monumental geopolitical changes.[52] For displaced youth group leaders, rebuilding prewar activities was essential, arguing that "the first job necessary … was to maintain Scoutism everywhere or wherever possible."[53] Continuing youth movements after the "exodus" of Jews fleeing the Germans, combined prewar ideologies with new people and localities, forming novel communities. By April 1941, for example, the number of EIF groups in the south grew over tenfold and membership surged from approximately two hundred to almost three thousand, nearly doubling the estimated membership for the whole country from June 1940.[54] Winter's group in Montpellier was, therefore, just one example of how young people maintained their prewar commitment to youth movements while responding to the war. Exploring Winter's youth movement in interwar Alsace, historian Erin Corber argues that by uniting in a physical space Jewish youth could "produce novel communal expressions and configurations" and "concrete expression of a vibrant Jewish life."[55] For Corber, the formation of these organizations explains how rescue and resistance networks in Southern France were so effective.

Geopolitical and demographic changes following the outbreak of the war, however, had a profound impact on these communities. The creation and regeneration of places for young Jews in southern France influenced these geographies of expression.[56] Youth movements created these spaces, providing an environment to learn and grow as future Jewish men and women. Within them, youths could express and develop their identities, explore their religion, and gain new skills both as citizens in waiting and as active participants in society. They were places designed for young people, but where adult concepts of ideology, religion, and gender were simultaneously institutionalized, implemented, and challenged.

Both the rural training centers and ideas about gender are examples of contested spaces. While youth centers were a continuation of the prewar *hachsharot*, they also reflected the Vichy "return to the land" policy that encouraged youth to reconnect with an agricultural tradition.[57] EIF leaders were well aware of this: Lautrec, they noted, was "approved by the Ministers of Youth and of Agriculture" and many scout activities across France were "in agreement with the Minister for the Interior."[58] While Jewish youth at Lautrec pursued these activities, Vichy youth groups like the *Compagnons de France* or CJF ran similar centers, directed at "moral and practical education" to create "children for the best service of France and God."[59] The ability of young men like Bloch to integrate easily from the CJF into the EIF is a

testament to their similarity. Furthermore, the gendered roles in groups like the EIF also reflected Vichy political ideology, which sought to portray girls as future mothers and encourage traditional family norms.[60] At a celebration of Joan of Arc in May 1941, for example, the Minister for Youth arranged for young people to dramatize Joan of Arc's life at mass parades.[61] Instead of presenting Joan of Arc in the traditional helmet and armor, the participants portrayed "a young girl of the home, national but not nationalistic, pious but not clerical, a warrior but not violent."[62] It was within this broader context that Jewish movements were so gendered.

There were, therefore, similarities and interconnectivities between Jewish youth groups and the values of Vichy France, which created a complex mixture of activity and identity that echoed long-existing discourses on assimilation and Jewish identity. During the war, as adults increasingly saw young people as the embodiment of hope, youth became a key part of both Jewish and French perceptions of the future. The dual contexts of Jewishness and Frenchness thus pervaded young people's lives. Though some of these ideas converged, others were starkly different, and thus Vichy and Jewish leaders presented young people with competing ideas about youth. Particularly for Orthodox groups, their strong focus on Jewish religion challenged Vichy's "pious but not clerical" approach. Furthermore, as groups like Winter's became increasingly radicalized, edging closer to resistance work, these two forces were further at odds. For young Jews like Winter and Bloch, coming of age and formulating their identities during this crisis had thus become a constant balancing act.

GOING UNDERGROUND: TRANSITION TO RESISTANCE AND RESCUE

Régine Gattegno was seventeen years old in 1940 when she joined the EIF. Two years later, she became an assistant to Paulette Gutwirth, leader of the young cadette branch and assumed an increased role in the movement's everyday life.[63] Her responsibilities developed further when, in response to a wave of arrests and deportations in 1942, the EIF established an underground wing known as the *Sixième* to help with rescue work. At this point, Gattegno was invited to become a smuggler, transporting forged papers to those in hiding. Recalling this, Gutwirth stated that Gattegno was chosen as a *Sixième* courier specifically because of her gender. Liaison and smuggling tasks, she asserted, "were reserved for girls, [who were] less vulnerable than boys."[64] Nonetheless, Gattegno was arrested in early 1943 while on a mission and subsequently deported to Sobibor, where she was murdered with others from her group.[65]

Concurrently, siblings Sarah and Jacques Weltmann fled with their family from their birthplace in Germany to France using false papers in 1933. Upon arrival, the family was separated: their father was sent to Algeria as part of the foreign legion and Sarah was interned in a camp, leaving Jacques and his mother alone. During this time, Jacques dealt on the black market to provide for the family. After Sarah's release following the start of the war, they fled Paris to avoid anti-Jewish roundups. The Marxist-Zionist youth group *Hashomer Hatzair* hid the children in a leper colony. Scared for their health, Sarah and Jacques left the leper colony and returned to their mother. Afterward, they were separated again, as their mother sent Jacques to a farm and Sarah to a convent, where she was pressured by nuns to convert.[66] Eventually, both decided to leave their hiding places once more, with Sarah moving into a *Sixième* safe house and Jacques joining the *Maquis*, attacking trains and factories.[67] Both survived the war.

Gattegno's and the Weltmanns' experiences show an unparalleled development of their roles and responsibilities that changed perceptions of resistance and self-help. From 1942 onward, as persecution intensified, both individuals and youth groups participated in various forms of resistance.[68] These included hiding children, smuggling them to Switzerland, forging papers, and distributing underground newspapers. Régine Gattegno, for example, couriered information and documents, while members of the Orthodox *Yechouroun* forged papers and smuggled children to Switzerland or into hiding.[69] Individuals and institutions transitioned from everyday activities to underground resistance as clandestine work became necessary for survival. Because of this, many institutions like the EIF, Zionists, and Orthodox evolved into resistance and rescue organizations.

The deportations of Jews from France began in March 1942, and was a pivotal moment for the development of Jewish youth. Remembering the heartbreaking moment he said good-bye to his parents,

Jacques Weltmann recalled his mother saying "don't worry about us, we want you to go and hide yourselves."[70] In response to the deportations, both individuals and youth groups shifted to resistance and rescue, taking on increasingly adult responsibilities. Groups of all ideological persuasions worked with the OSE to pivot from providing aid to hiding children in underground networks.[71] French historian Jacques Adler argued that these concurrent developments across Jewish society in France laid the groundwork for "united action" between various Jewish institutions.[72] It is important to note, however, that no matter how far organizations cooperated with each other, they maintained their separate beliefs. Testimonies from individuals like Gattegno attest to how they retained their EIF identities. Serge Klarsfeld's observation that the OSE and EIF was a model for Jewish and non-Jewish organizations working together rings true,[73] as these groups assumed new roles and developed new connections, yet maintained their core identity.

As a result, despite these major changes, persecution failed to fundamentally alter these youths. Though they adopted new roles, the existing frameworks and ideologies remained intact. The progression of young people and youth groups toward these new roles came naturally, as young people sought to preserve their communities. Indeed, charting young people's trajectories through the war reveals personal development based on their youth movements rather than narratives of persecution and resistance. Historiography on resistance, which is often fixated on acts of defiance instead of understanding subjective experiences, often misses this nuance. As is evident from Régine Gattegno's experience, when youth groups evolved in response to persecution, they empowered their members to take bolder steps. This has sometimes been recognized in historiography, especially in specialized French-language works. In what is perhaps the earliest history of Jewish resistance in France, David Knout commented that "having been officially disbanded, the scouts' period of clandestinity commenced."[74] Here, Knout observed how youth movements seamlessly transitioned from official to underground work. Youth movement leaders recognized this change at the time too. Reflecting on their time during the war, one EIF writer commented in August 1944 that although "our movement had to see several dissolutions … it has responded each time with a greater clandestinity; it has finished by becoming a veritable organism of resistance."[75]

Despite this seemingly smooth transition, the shift toward underground work introduced new elements into young people's identities, forcing them to balance a public and private persona as official and underground work became increasingly intertwined. The wartime institutions they were compelled to work—what French historian Adam Rayski terms the "compulsory community"—impacted their identities.[76] For the youth movements, the German-instituted *Union Générale des Israélites de France* (General Union of Jews of France, UGIF) offered a "vast grey zone" to conduct underground operations under the cover of a legitimate organization.[77] As the UGIF was the official institution established by the occupation forces, it is one of the great ironies of this system that the *Sixième*—arguably one of the leading Jewish resistance and rescue organizations—took its name from this institution, as it was its sixth section.[78]

Indeed, official and clandestine work often intersected. Many spaces held a dual function, as both official youth centers and localities for underground activity. This was the case for the youth movement hub at Moissac, as well as most OSE children's homes from which the EIF often sent children into hiding.[79] Not only did the UGIF and underground cohabit spaces, they also shared members. UGIF accounts show the issuing of more than seventy thousand francs in bursaries to the EIF.[80] The interconnection between the UGIF and increasingly radicalized youth movements put further strain on the historic balance in French society between assimilation and maintaining Jewish identity, which in turn impacted the ability of youths to balance these multiple identities.

Traditional perceptions of gender also fundamentally shaped young people's experiences, with young women and men holding gendered roles in the underground. Pauline Gutwirth's comment that girls were "less vulnerable" smugglers was not unique, and, in fact, represented the norm. Explaining why he recruited seventeen-year-old Hilde Haberman as an EIF courier, one resistance leader said that, as a young woman it was more difficult for the authorities to confirm that she was Jewish. Alternatively, Jewish men were sometimes subjected to "brutal 'medical examinations'"—if they were circumcised, authorities assumed that they were Jewish.[81] Recognizing this, works on women in the resistance have

argued convincingly that "the role of *passeur* (courier) was often taken by women," especially young women.[82] EIF leaders were acutely aware of this and often promoted it. The head of the EIF Robert Gamzon recalled how in 1943 he directed twenty-year-old Marc Armon "to position all the youth of a mobilizing age for the *Maquis* that I directed, and for social assistance by working as smugglers."[83] When Gamzon wrote this, he used the female version of the word "smuggler" (*convoyeuse*). Taking these semantics seriously reveals how Gamzon viewed the separate roles of males and females: men were in his view meant to lead armed resistance in the *Maquis*, whereas women were to lead smuggling and social work. Examples abound of young women like Gattegno, who risked their lives as members of the youth movements, smuggling children, working as "social assistants," and using what they described in postwar interviews as their "naïve and innocent figure" to courier forged papers.[84] The significance of this work cannot be underestimated: the *Sixième* hid approximately seven to eight hundred Jewish children in the Toulouse area, while another clandestine branch of the UGIF hid another one to two thousand children with foster families.[85] This has become increasingly recognized by historiography in recent years, a development Bartrop and Lakin termed "rescuing the rescuers" as they argued that women showed "remarkable courage" and set "a moral compass for others to follow."[86] Gender role perceptions thus framed the activities of young people, particularly young women, even as youth movements transitioned to rescue and resistance.

Irrespective of youth group membership, young Jews experienced previously unimaginable responsibilities. Jacques and Sarah Weltmann's actions are a testament to this. By deciding to leave both the leper colony and convent they took control of their lives, making life-or-death decisions at a young age. This echoed the roles of young Jews in the *Sixième* and OSE, who, in the words of one contemporary: "hardly older than the majority of the children they were in charge of, supported their spirit and their hope."[87] Jacques Kowal, for example, recalled how as a teenage member of the EIF in Toulouse he was mobilized for the rescue effort; his job, he said, to "save children."[88] By taking responsibility for the lives of other young people, *Sixième* members like Kowal experienced a similar situation to that of Weltmann. Whether they were part of an institution or not, they underwent an accelerated maturity as youths, thrust into new and dangerous roles.

Furthermore, young people faced similar challenges when hiding in Christian institutions that offered relative safety, as is evident from the aforementioned story of Sarah Weltman.[89] Such pressure was not rare; several Jewish organizations raised concerns about placing children with Christian institutions for fear that they would encourage them to convert.[90] Indeed, after the war, conflict ensued between Jewish and Christian institutions over orphans' care.[91] Youth as a category of analysis thus dismantles barriers between histories of individual and institutional rescue efforts, as youths in different environments faced similar challenges.

When Gattegno became a scout leader in 1942, her role differed starkly to that of leaders in the early training camps like Lautrec: Gattegno was not only a scout, but also a *resistant.* From 1942 onward, Jewish youth groups like the EIF, *Yechouroun,* and Zionists transformed into resistance and rescue organizations. This had a profound impact on their members, bringing about accelerated development as they assumed adult roles and responsibilities in underground movements focused on smuggling, forging, and hiding. When young people undertook these roles, they often did so within the framework of preexisting youth movements. Together, prewar ideologies and wartime responses molded young people's subjectivities and experiences as young scouts, young women, and young Zionists. Not only did ideas about religion or gender shape the way young people experienced the war, they also often determined their activities. Thus, young people within these various institutions were united in approaching their new roles less out of a desire to join the resistance than a natural progression of their long held common identity as part of a Jewish youth movement.

CONCLUSION

Many of the young Jews described above did not live to see the end of the war. They were deported to extermination camps and murdered, executed, or died in combat. Many of the institutions of which they were a part, however, are still in operation today.[92] In the immediate postwar years, the EIF

continued to run children's homes, looking after hundreds of children in Paris alone.[93] Zionist groups continued their quest for a Jewish homeland, as Zionism became increasingly popular for the *Sh'erit ha-Pletah*, the "surviving remnant" of Jews in postwar Europe.[94] Leaders of the Orthodox *Yechouroun* groups also reestablished their work with "more vigor and ardour," running soup kitchens, religious education, and spiritual enrichment.[95] For many of these institutions (as for many of their members) the Holocaust era was one of accelerated development and new roles. Youth groups transitioned to an underground existence in order to maintain their activities, support their communities, and protect their members' lives. These transformations, however, took part within a larger narrative of youth, which is a story of constantly evolving perceptions of youth that offer an alternative narrative of the Holocaust and the war.

Viewing Jews during the Holocaust in France through this lens reveals a distinct yet varied young person's experience, with complex and multifaceted paths through the war. Young people's trajectories saw them in perpetual negotiation with other elements of their identities. For this reason, their experiences cannot be understood without the long-term context of youth movements and their rapid maturity during the war. Coming of age during the Holocaust meant not only interacting with persecution, but also with prewar discourses on gender, ideology, religion, and the place of young people in society. Charting the trajectories of individual young people and Jewish youth groups within their multiple contexts reveals a radicalizing and accelerated wartime development. In so doing, it becomes possible to decenter entrenched narratives of persecution, resistance, and chronology, as well as enhance our understanding of the categories of gender, ideology, and religion.

Both throughout the 1930s and at the beginning of the war, many young Jews joined disparate youth movements like the EIF, Orthodox *Yechouroun*, and Zionist *Hashomer Hatzair*. They often did so in order to feel part of a community, enjoy themselves, and develop their identities during a time of increasing uncertainty. These movements also gave young Jews the opportunity to develop skills, understand their place within French and Jewish society, and create long-lasting interpersonal solidarities and communities. Indeed, leading figures in wartime youth movements and resistance networks took part before or at the beginning of the war. While these activities could never have been a conscious preparation for wartime resistance activities, the training and experiences they offered gave young people valuable skills and networks that undoubtedly helped them in later transitions to underground and resistance activity. By considering young people's wartime activities through the category of their youth, crucial prewar and wartime events thus appear front and center in their development.

After the German invasion of France, many Jews moved to areas of unoccupied southern France, and set up new groups across southern France in towns such as Lyon, Marseille, Vichy, and Nice.[96] In this new environment, youth movements continued their prewar work, adapting to new circumstances. Not only did this change the geographical spread of young people, it also created new opportunities for youth leadership. Furthermore, increasingly perceived as both France and Judaism's hope for the future, young people in early Vichy France grew up within multiple competing ideological contexts, which were simultaneously imposed on and challenged by young Jews, revealing an increase in their roles and responsibilities. These themes intensified as the war and persecution progressed.

Throughout 1942, as wearing the yellow star became compulsory, deportations of Jews from Drancy to extermination camps in the East began, and the roundup of Jews intensified, the period of almost typical everyday life for Jews in France came to an end. Both young Jews and the institutions they were a part of transformed dramatically, with profound impacts on their roles and responsibilities. Underground work became routine for members of the youth movements and an increasing number of young people were sent into, or encouraged to help with, hiding, amid mounting fears for their safety. Once again, young people were perceived as a crucial part of Jewish society to protect. Despite ideological disagreements, Jewish groups of all persuasions worked, sometimes together, to save children and the young. As youth movements transformed themselves into rescue and aid organizations, the young people took on central roles forging documents, couriering information, and smuggling people. They did so within the familiar environment of their youth movements, alongside many of the same people and

in many of the same groups as they had done before. Despite this continuity, their new roles placed further strain on their identities and the ways they negotiated their religion, gender, and politics. Focusing on youth during this tumultuous time uncovers a seemingly natural yet deeply impactful progression.

The Holocaust thus changed these young people. In responding to persecution, young Jews called upon long-term personal and group histories and solidarities to create myriad different paths through the war. Some of these led to armed resistance, others to hiding, and others to aiding the underground. Understanding these journeys through the lens of youth reveals a sequence of profound changes in how young people and youth organizations perceived and enacted their daily activities. In response to persecution, what it meant to be a young Orthodox, a young Zionist, a young man, or a young woman changed immensely. These changes interacted constantly with long-term discourses on identity, youth, religion, ideology, and gender. Yet as Denise Gamzon, the wife of EIF head Robert Gamzon, remarked when recalling one young scout's entry into the *Maquis*, these developments came "completely naturally."[97]

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