Stolen Manhood?

German-Jewish Masculinities in the Third Reich, 1933-1945

by

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Abstract

When the Nazis came to power in Germany, they used various strategies to expel German Jews from social, cultural and economic life. My dissertation focuses on gendered forms of discrimination which had impacts on Jewish masculine identity. I am asking how Jewish men experienced these challenges and the undermining of their self-understandings as men in the Third Reich. How did Jewish men adhere to pre-established gender norms and practices such as the role of serving as the providers and protectors of their families? How did Jewish men maintain their sense of being patriotic German war veterans and members of the national community? And finally, how did Jewish men react to being exposed to the physical assaults and violence that was overwhelmingly directed against them in prewar Germany? These central questions form the basis of my study of Jewish masculinities in the Third Reich. I argue that Jewish men’s gender identities, intersecting with categories of ethnicity, race, class and age, underwent a profound process of marginalization that undermined their accustomed ways of performing masculinity; yet at the same time, in their attempts to sustain their conception of masculinity they maintained sufficient agency and developed coping strategies to prevent their full-scale emasculation. Jewish men adapted to their persecution by finding alternative employment, assuming an increased presence in the domestic sphere as fathers and husbands; maintaining an emotional spiritual-belonging to Germany; resisting their sexual-racial classification as racial defilers; minimizing physical victimization in concentration camps and the public by embodying military virtues like strength and discipline; and finally developing gendered survival strategies living as “illegals” in the underground during the years of the Holocaust. In their totality of perceptions, reactions and often overlapping coping strategies, Jewish men comprised a heterogenous group of marginalized men who with their families strove to have normal lives in Nazi Germany.
Lay Summary

This dissertation examines the lives of German Jewish men in Nazi Germany through the lens of gender. I show how the Nazis sought to emasculate Jewish men by way of propaganda, law and physical violence, and how in turn masculine self-understandings, perceptions and identities changed under Nazi rule. When their adherence to hegemonic, mainstream practices of masculinity were challenged and undermined, many Jewish men turned to despondent, depressive and even suicidal behaviors, but others were able to negotiate their new status by developing coping mechanisms that allowed them to defy emasculation and adapt – at least temporarily – to their marginalized status as men.
Preface

This dissertation is the original, unpublished, independent work by the author, S. Huebel.
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List of Abbreviations

Archives:

GDW  Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand Berlin (German Resistance Memorial Center)
JMB  Jüdisches Museum Berlin
LBINY Leo Baeck Institute New York
USHMM United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C.
Acknowledgements

It has been a long and stony path to come to the point of completing this doctoral dissertation. After finishing High School in Germany in 2003, I was, at first, not even sure if I was made for academic studying though my interest in German History had developed much earlier. Thanks to the fantastic history staff at Thompson Rivers University, however, I felt soon vindicated in my instinct for a scholarly education. At the University of Victoria, the small-town boy that I was had to adjust to the life of a bigger city and an even more eminent university. But it was at the University of British Columbia where I made the transition from someone with a sincere interest in and a solid knowledge of European and German history to a professionally trained historian. This would not have been possible without the support of many people. First of all, of course, sincere thanks go to my supervisor Christopher R. Friedrichs who accompanied my path for the entire five years and whom I made read numerous essay drafts, scholarship applications and job applications, all filled with linguistic deficiencies and grammatical mistakes. Our meetings in his spectacular ocean-view office and at his home will be missed. Many thanks also to my other committee members Dr. Richard Menkis and Dr. Kyle Frackman who with their respective fields of expertise in Jewish history and German/Gender studies contributed significantly to this study. Special thanks also go to Thomas Kühne at Clark University who volunteered to read most of my dissertation and critically pushed me to reconsider my work. I would also like to thank Till van Rahden for his sensible criticisms in his capacity as external reviewer. Signs of gratitude also have to be forwarded to the University of British Columbia and the Department of History for its generous financial support in the form of a major fellowship and multiple summer research grants. I am further indebted to a John Conway Travel Scholarship, a German Historical Institute Summer Archival Fellowship as well as a Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar Stipend from the same organization, a Jewish Auschwitz Center Fellowship and finally, a stipend to attend the Max and Hilde Kochmann Seminar in German-Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex. Thanks to them, I was extremely fortunate to travel to Europe on several occasions to personally engage with some of the places I studied in such detail and meet fellows in my field. Thanks also go to the professional support at the Jewish Museum in Berlin, Franziska Bogdanov; the historian Beate Kosmala who granted me access to the archives of the German Resistance Memorial in Berlin as well as Megan Lewis at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. More anonymously, I am indebted to all the staff and volunteers who helped digitalize the extensive collections at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York which sources I could conveniently access from my home in Langley.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my children Ellie and Jasper
Introduction

This study is about stories, stories written by German-Jewish men and about German-Jewish men in the Third Reich. It is about men who put on their World War I medals at the time when German Jews were expelled from the military and their public reputations were challenged. It is about men who were deemed hypersexualized racial defilers of German women. It is about working men who faced existential struggles in Nazi Germany and challenges in fulfilling their roles as fathers and husbands. It is also about Jewish men who were specifically singled out as men and often brutalized in their homes and in concentration camps. Finally, it is about Jewish men who faced specific challenges in their attempts to resist deportation and survive the Holocaust in the underground. In short, this dissertation is about the gendered experiences, challenges, victimizations, reactions and negotiations of Jewish men who saw their masculinities jeopardized by the Nazi regime. This study asks: How did Jewish men come to perceive the onslaught of Nazi antisemitism in the Third Reich as men? How did they experience and cope with the radical dislodging of their roles as proud and patriotic war veterans who had always closely identified with their country? How did Jewish men adapt to economic restrictions and hardships in their roles as breadwinners and providers for their families? How did Jewish men as husbands and fathers perform the roles of protectors of their families? How did they experience the sudden exposure to physical violence on the street and in Germany’s prewar concentration camps, such as in the period following Kristallnacht? And finally, what risks did Jewish men face during their “illegal” lives while running away from the Nazis and their deportations during the war? These are the central questions this dissertation seeks to answer. It is a study of Jewish masculinities in the Third Reich.
Introduction

Historiography

Few other fields have received more scholarly attention and witnessed such an enormous output of literature than the Holocaust and World War II. While for years the focus had been on the political and military leaders and events, in the 1970s attention gradually shifted toward the victims of genocide. This turn coincided with the rise in women’s and gender history that criticized the neglect of women as historical agents and their subjugations and victimization. Since the 1990s, especially with the growth in oral histories and historians’ scrutiny of first-person narratives like memoirs and diaries, an impressive corpus of literature on the Jewish experience during the Holocaust and the Third Reich has emerged. As Saul Friedländer has rightly postulated, “The voices of the victims are essential if we want to attain an understanding of the past.”¹

The process of writing and re-writing history is, by definition, a perpetual undertaking. The historian’s task is to formulate new questions for hitherto under-researched areas. One such field is gender. Gender history has witnessed an astounding output of literature on women in the Holocaust, most notably by scholars like Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust) and Dalia Ofer and Leonore Weitzman (Women in the Holocaust) to name but a few.² This field has shed important light on the gendered forms of victimization and overall experience by women, which was previously largely a neglected field of study.

However, as inextricable as gender has become to our overall understanding of history in general and the Jewish experience during the Holocaust in particular, the study of gender continues to focus primarily on women. In the context of Holocaust historiography, as Sara Horowitz has

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elucidated, historians have used two major approaches.\textsuperscript{3} The first describes (Jewish) women as objects of various forms of Nazi violence, whereas the second approach depicts women as heroic resisters of Nazi oppression. Especially the second approach has more recently gained momentum thanks to feminist historians who criticize earlier historians’ one-sided portrayal of women as victims. Directly defying Nazi orders and managing to keep their families together and their children safe and sound, Jewish women have been put into a narrative of female self-determination, an approach most famously advocated by Marion Kaplan in her influential work *Between Dignity and Despair.*\textsuperscript{4}

Though both approaches offered new and important insights pertaining to women’s history, in terms of gender constructions of men/masculinity in relation to women/femininity both are deficient. The first approach, looking at the persecution of women, is reticent on aspects of male suffering and instead focuses on patriarchal forms of oppression (the Nazis as misogynists), while the latter approach contextualizes femininity in relation to masculinity, arguing that women took over men’s roles, defending their families and their children and taking care of their despondent husbands. Even the second approach, as convincing as the thesis of a “gender role reversal” (Kaplan) under the Nazis might be, implies too monolithically that Jewish men – because they faced ridicule and exclusion in the public sphere as well as degradation and loss of work – lapsed into depressive behavior, passivity and often suicide. Nechama Tec, for instance, writes:

The Germans put… almost impossible challenges in the fulfillment of [the role] of the breadwinner. When Jewish men found themselves unable to do what traditional society expected of them, they frequently became demoralized and depressed.\textsuperscript{5}

As a result, findings on Jewish masculinities during the Holocaust have taken on a myopic and distorted character, and conclusions pertaining to Jewish men and masculinity in the Third Reich remain tenuous. When Ronit Lentin writes that “women Shoah survivors speak of sexual humiliation, rape, sexual exchange, pregnancy, abortion, and vulnerability through their children – concerns male survivors tend not to describe,”6 the author rightly alludes to gender-idiosyncratic aspects of women’s position under a murderous regime. Yet, subsequent hypothesizing about the seeming uniqueness and particular vulnerability of women not only obscures men’s role in the Jewish tragedy but inadvertently creates a seeming hierarchy of suffering in which the victims are played off against each other. As a striking example, the title of Judith T. Baumel’s *Double Jeopardy* is programmatic and suggests that Jewish women suffered from being Jewish and female.7 What it overlooks is that Jewish men, too, could be interpreted as “doubly jeopardized” in the Third Reich, facing gendered incriminations of their cultural and social identities as well as their physical bodies. These German-Jewish men and their gendered experiences need to be studied in detail.

To be sure, masculinity studies have proliferated in the last two decades, stressing the multi-faceted and complex constructions and practices of masculinities in the past and present. The notion that history had traditionally focused on men and been written by men was gradually superseded by the insight that while men or certain groups of men predominantly featured in historical analyses, there was very little understanding of what constituted manhood in the past and how men interpreted and practiced their gender identities. Influenced by queer theory and a postcolonial interest in race, scholars gradually shifted toward studying marginalized groups of

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men and their gendered victimizations and uses of violence. Works by the sociologist Raewyn Connell and the anthropologist David Gilmore as well as pioneering historical studies by John Tosh in the 1990s have made men’s studies a credible field of analysis. In the more specific non-political realm of German history, gender historians such as Ute Frevert and Ann-Charlott Trepp have expanded women’s studies with a more gendered focus on men. In the field of Third Reich studies, Klaus Theweleit and George Mosse were some of the first to study the importance of masculinity in fascist ideologies. Daniel Wildman has examined the cultural formations of the idealized Nazi “Aryan” masculinity in propaganda and film. Thomas Kühne has looked at constructions of masculinity and comradeship among Wehrmacht soldiers. Anette Dietrich and Ljiljana Heisse have edited a volume of essays on the subject of masculinities in the Third Reich. Yet, German-Jewish men as gendered subjects in Nazi Germany have not been subject to a thorough and comprehensive study. As Benjamin Baader, Sharon Gillerman and Paul Lerner have astutely noted:

Scholars have yet to provide a detailed analysis of what Nazi persecution meant for Jewish men as men, or to thematize the masculinity of Jewish men in National Socialist Germany in a systematic and sustained manner. Thus at this point we have far too little insight into the psychological impact of Nazi propaganda and policy,

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Introduction

or of the experience of street violence, physical intimidation and humiliation, deportation and life in concentration camps on masculine self-identity in those years.14

This work aims to make a serious contribution to fulfilling this desideratum.

Only recently have a few scholars begun to examine Jewish masculinity during the time of Nazism.15 Anna-Madeleine Halkes-Carey’s pioneering dissertation (2015) of Jewish men during the Holocaust is an important start in the right direction.16 Kim Wünschmann in her perceptive study (2015) of German-Jewish men and their experiences in German prewar concentration camps further augments this shift toward men’s studies.17 Yet, Halkes-Carey’s focus, like that of most Holocaust scholars, is on the years of genocide, 1941 to 1945, and thus eschews discussions of longer-term developments, changes and adaptations by Jewish men and their gender identities under Nazi rule. Moreover, although Halkes-Carey ambitiously looks at many (perhaps too many) countries of distinct cultural and historical backgrounds in Eastern and Western Europe, she does not include German Jews. Wünschmann’s impressive study, on the other hand, goes into detail about German-Jewish masculinity in Nazi camps prior to the Holocaust and men’s gendered coping mechanisms. Yet her study is confined to the microcosm of concentration camps. Though this is a key area of research, it excludes a closer look into Jewish men’s gendered experiences under Hitler outside the camps, especially in the years 1933 to 1938 when Jewish men, like women,

15 Even outside the context of Nazi Germany, there are few studies, mostly non-historical, that have looked at Jewish men. See for instance, Harry Brod, ed. A Mensch Among Men: Explorations in Jewish Masculinity (Berkeley: The Crossing Press, 1988); Daniel Boyarin, Unheroic Conduct: The Rise if Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Carson Philipps, “Post-Holocaust Conceptualizations of Masculinity in Germanophone and Jewish Men” PhD Dissertation (York University, 2013).
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faced a wide array of challenges and intrusions into their daily lives, ranging from antisemitic discursive attacks in propaganda and media to physical attacks by howling Nazi thugs on the street and the dissolution of economic means to make a living. Providing a comprehensive account of Jewish men’s experiences and negotiations of their gender identities over a longer stretch of time, from 1933 to 1945, and incorporating gender construction, performativity, contestation and negotiation in different arenas, public and private, are therefore guiding principles of this work.

Theory

This dissertation considers masculinity as an identity configuration achieved through processes of identification and differentiation. Signifiers like cultural symbols, social practices and bodies connote masculinity in relation to femininity. Such configurations are embedded as cultural norms as well as social practices and relationships of power. Because definitions of masculinity are dependent on understandings of femininity and vice versa, this study realizes the importance of incorporating definitions of femininity as well as women’s views and their contributions to establishing masculinities. Consequently, women have an important voice in my study.

Women witnessed and experienced Jewish men’s internal struggles to maintain their gender roles. Gender is a concept of difference, always preoccupied with the instability in power relations between and within the sexes. Jewish men’s (self-perceived) erosion of male authority and identity was no different, as it occurred in a social context of power relations that only acquired meaning in the presence of women to whom men appeared lacking in masculine virtue and vigor. Gradually losing the grip over their own and their families’ lives signified a loss of authority and created feelings of powerlessness that were intricately linked to conceptions of masculinity. In such an emasculated state, men left a void that, according to Kaplan, Jewish women filled.
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It remains to be seen, however, if men’s altered situation necessarily and persistently led to perceptions of powerlessness, and thus emasculation, despite the evident erosion of men’s authority and control in public and at home. What gender as a relational category constitutes is that any understanding of German-Jewish masculinities is not obtainable without taking alternative models of masculinity and definitions of femininity into account. Gender and masculinity are always relationally interdependent. 18

As a relational category, gender does not exclusively rely on a masculinity-versus-femininity formula, as it is often assumed. Alternative, competing configurations within one gender also produce inequality. Masculinities are multiple and variable and their formative processes are ongoing. In the Third Reich, Jewish men constituted their sense of Jewish masculinity by orientation to an elusive yet manifest mainstream masculinity, something George Mosse calls “stereotypical masculinity.” 19 In gentile Nazi society, masculinity was increasingly defined by racial doctrines, by physical markers such as strong bodies, and by the cultivation of military values such as steadfastness, bravery, courage, discipline and obedience. At the same time, previously-established definitions of masculinity, featuring monogamy and heterosexuality for instance, were sustained. Thus, to understand the evolution of German-Jewish masculinities, one needs to understand prevailing concepts of non-Jewish masculinities as well.

For a more specific theoretical framework, I rely on Raewyn Connell who understands masculinity in multiple and hierarchal types, including hegemonic and marginalized masculinities.

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18 Dedre Gentner and Kenneth J. Kurtz define relational category as a category whose membership is determined by a common relational structure rather than common properties. They argue “for instance, for X to be a bridge, X must connect two other entities or points; for X to be a carnivore, X must eat animals. Relational categories contrast with entity categories such as tulip or camel, whose members share many intrinsic properties. Relational categories cohere on the basis of a core relationship fulfilled by all members. See Dedre Gentner & Kenneth J. Kurtz, “Learning and using relational categories,” in Categorization inside and outside the laboratory, eds. W. K. Ahn, R. L. Goldstone, B. C. Love, A. B. Markman & P. W. Wolff (Washington, DC: APA, 2005), 151.
19 Mosse, The Image of Man, 6.
As John Tosh has noted, unlike sex role theory and the concept of patriarchy, Connell’s model of hegemonic masculinity allows for a subtler gender differentiation vis-à-vis women/femininity and among constructions and practices within one gender.²⁰ Sex role theory denotes a sense of permanence and immutability in male/female behavior. For decades, scientists explained and assigned allegedly natural gender traits to each sex (e.g., men are naturally more aggressive). The theory of patriarchy, on the other hand, claims in undifferentiated ways the systemic oppression of women while it discounts the oppression of men, especially men of minority and marginalized groups. Both theories tend to monolithically reduce men to a single, coherent group with allegedly biologically-determined characteristics and behaviors. Gender, however, needs to be understood as a social-cultural construct and practice embedded in relationships that are contingent on situational factors. As Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner phrase it: “Men are not born. They are made.”²¹

To give one concrete example, when Jewish men were legally deprived of their citizenship – an emotional ordeal for many fatherland-loving patriots – many wore their veterans’ military medals and thus exhibited a manifest, spiritual sense of national belonging. It was one of many spontaneously gendered reactions that together would constitute a (but not the) German-Jewish masculinity in the Third Reich. As will become evident, Jewish men adapted to the fluctuating changes in gender constructions by institutions such as the state and the media. In this study, I base my arguments not on sex roles, predetermined by biology, but on gender and masculinity as socio-cultural practices, performed and experienced both mentally and physically. This approach, I believe, allows the historian to perceive agency – though not unlimited – in the subjects in

question: German-Jewish men, who maintained self-determination and autonomies over their daily lives. As Connell argues:

To recognize diversity in masculinities is not enough. We must also recognize the relations between the different kinds of masculinity; relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity.\textsuperscript{22}

At the center of Connell’s theory lies the concept of hegemonic masculinity defined as a configuration that embeds men’s dominant position over women and other men in cultural discourses, social practices and legal norms. As gender scholars have noted, however, hegemonic claims of masculinity are inherently unstable, constantly questioned, challenged and subject to change over time. Observing both key aspects – relationality and hierarchy – this dissertation positions German-Jewish masculinity in this matrix of fluid and competing masculinities. As Jewish men tried to adhere to hegemonic images of masculinity that were defined by cultural norms and social relations, in their highly assimilated lives, they hardly differentiated themselves in their (gender) identities from non-Jewish men before 1933, and after 1933 most continued to share similar views of what constituted ideal manhood: being a heterosexual man who could establish a family that he provided for and protected and who strongly identified with German-national causes, regardless of class, religious or political background.

Hoping to remain part of such an overly imagined hegemonic community that defined ideal manhood, Jewish men were marginalized, pushed to the edge by implicit and explicit attempts of the state, civil society and other agencies of power. All denied Jewish men their continued practice and adherence to hegemonic markers of masculinity. This marginalization occurred in a social context with the state, the media and society celebrating the creation of a \textit{Volksgemeinschaft} that

\textsuperscript{22} R. W. Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 37
center-staged the strong, healthy and soldierly “Aryan” male and made Jewish men look especially excluded.

The center of attention in this study, therefore, is not a singular model of masculinity but the process of marginalizing a loosely defined group of Jewish men who sought to resist their emasculation, which I define as the attempt to fully marginalize Jewish men from the hegemonic center of masculinity and its norms. Marginalization refers to ostracized groups of men (defined by skin color, race, ethnicity, religion) who are pushed to the margins from a center that is vaguely defined and to which these men try to navigate a return. Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, is logically based on relational and hierarchical counterparts. In this dissertation the focus will be on Jewish men’s discursive, legal and social marginalization by the state and the Jewish – men’s and women’s – reactions to this process, including acceptance, submission and resignation, but also contestation, negotiation and deviance.

Subsequently, this dissertation concentrates on the many German-Jewish men who thought they fitted into the hegemonic model. As I mentioned, other categories of masculinity exist, and it would be false to assume that all Jewish men were part of such a model prior to 1933. Marginalization had occurred prior to Hitler’s rise to power, and Jewish homosexual men, for instance, or Jewish advocates of legalizing homosexuality, such as the famous sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, faced harsh discrimination long before the Nazis systematically prosecuted Jewish and non-Jewish homosexuals. Due to the striking lack of primary sources by Jewish homosexual men, however, a closer look at some of the Jewish men who had been marginalized prior to 1933 turned into an irreconcilable challenge. The hegemonic model used in this dissertation, thus does not intend to erase or undermine the existence of other Jewish marginalized masculinities that had existed prior to 1933. The author rather acknowledges that the focus is on a concept of hegemonic
masculinity that is marked by such features as men being monogamous and heterosexual, as being fathers and husbands, and as being providers and protectors as well as citizen-soldiers, in short features that German-Jewish men sought to adhere to but were increasingly marginalized from.

Critics might say that the process of marginalization allocates considerable control to the state and deprives Jewish men – whose lives, it seems, were radically changed by the Nazi regime – of agency. This study, however, circumvents this caveat by incorporating Judith Butler’s innovative theory of “gender performativity” that liberates the gendered subject, returning agency to the individual. The multiple voices that take on a visible presence in this dissertation demonstrate the varieties of perceptions German-Jewish men had and that pertained to the socio-economic, cultural and political changes happening in the Third Reich. Moreover, these sources witness the remarkable resilience and restraint German-Jewish men exhibited, trying to sustain or regain control over their and their families’ lives. Giving a voice to these actors of the past eschews another construction of Jews as passive victims of Nazism.

Yet, creating a patchwork of myriad excerpts of Jewish men’s records and their attempts to sustain a normal life brings with it the risk of overemphasizing individual agency. To avoid this fallacy, I rely on Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. According to Butler:

The performance of a gender is compelled by norms that none of us choose. We work within the norms that constitute us as individuals. These norms are the condition for our agency, but they also limit our agency. So while there is an aspect of performance at play, this does not mean that the meaning of the performance is established by the intention of the actor – hardly. What are being performed are the cultural norms that condition and limit the actor in the situation.23

Though German-Jewish men unveiled an array of different responses, their actions were largely performative, and thus part voluntary and part preprogrammed. When Jewish men, for instance, resorted to behaviors of demonstrating their Germanness in 1933, by visibly showcasing

23 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 34
their World War I medals or publicly referencing their war contributions, they chose to do so voluntarily. At the same time, however, as Butler’s model of performativity hints at, Jewish men relied on preexisting and embedded norms and values that these individual men had little control over. German-Jewish men were the products of their time and place, and their demonstrations of military masculinity, to name one instance, were a direct reflection of the prevailing social, cultural and gender norms and discourses that they were a part of.

Jewish men’s performativity, moreover, resonated in the public and domestic domain. Going beyond the private versus public sphere debate, I consider masculinities (and femininities) to be constructed and experienced in both spheres. This study thus looks at men in various realms where cultural constructions and social practices of masculinity were (re-)defined, challenged and actively re-negotiated. Finally, though gender analysis comes to fruition only in relational contexts with multiple conceptions of femininity and masculinity at all times working with and against each other, other categories – most notably race, class and ethnicity, but I would add age as a category as well – are equally crucial. Only if partnered with other categories is gender capable of highlighting a diversity of and inequality in social relations and practices. For this dissertation, therefore, gender is used as a category of intersectionality that conceptualizes the oppression of Jewish men in the Third Reich not exclusively as gendered subjects, but as men with a cumulative identity in which the categories of nationality and citizenship, their religiously-racially defined

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24 Karin Hausen had argued in her seminal essay that in 19th-century European culture, there was a separation of public and private spheres along gender lines that put women into the private sphere and men into the public. More recently, however, scholars are starting to argue these were more cultural norms than practices. Not only did women take important roles in the public sphere, in welfare organizations, for instance, but men also took important roles in the domestic sphere. My chapter on fathers and husbands in particular fits into this newer historiography. See Karin Hausen, “Family and Role Division: The Polarization of Sexual Stereotypes in the 19th century. An Aspect of the Dissociation of Work and Family Life,” in The German Family. Essays on the Social History of the Family in 19th- and 20th-century Germany, ed. Richard Evans (London: Croom Helm, 1981). For more recent approaches, see Raffaella Sarti, ed. “Men at Home: Domesticities, Authority, Emotions and Work,” Gender & History 27, no. 3 (2015).
Introduction

Jewishness as well as their class backgrounds and age are all indispensable.\textsuperscript{25} As Ann Phoenix and Pamela Pattynama have argued, fruitful knowledge production must treat social positions – in this case the positions of Jewish men – as relational and “make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it.”\textsuperscript{26} If we want to gain a nuanced and meaningful picture of the Jewish experience in the Third Reich, the historian needs to conceptualize gender as a category that is inextricably linked to other categories and not locked into its own ontological paradigm.

As a result, in order to comprehend German-Jewish masculinities, it is imperative to provide a coherent definition of the supplementing categories such as Jewishness, Germanness, class and age. For the first, definitions of Jewishness, I rely on Harriet P. Freidenreich’s categorization of Jews as religious Jews, whom she calls “Jewish Jews” or pious Jews, less religious Jews, whom she refers to as “just Jews” or Jews who would attend the synagogue only on important religious holidays, and “former Jews,” who had once belonged to but left their Jewish communities, but whom the Nazis, nevertheless, classified as Jews.\textsuperscript{27} Jewish men of all three groups are subject to this study though the majority of men belonged to the second and third categories as highly assimilated individuals. It will become evident that while for some men their gender identity intersected with their religious identities, for many, their Jewishness was primarily a category that the perpetrators used and that had less direct impact on their gender identity.


\textsuperscript{27} Harriet Pass Freidenreich, “Gender, Identity, and Community: Jewish University Women in Germany and Austria,” in \textit{In Search of Jewish Community: Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918-1933} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 154-175.
In terms of citizenship, I will look at German-Jewish men who identified themselves as German subjects, regardless of their formal status. For instance, East European Jews who had moved to Germany in the early 20th century (and who would have fought on the German side during World War I) but who technically lacked a German passport are just as well included as German Jews who did possess official documents.

Class is another crucial category that strongly intersects with gender. Yet class too, could strongly vary in contextual importance. While for upper-middle class men, their struggles to maintain their socio-economic positions might have been more of a pressing and humiliating experience than for lower-class Jewish men, in terms of military masculinity, for instance, Jewish men demonstrated their national belonging and pride for their country regardless of economic background, and class thus seemed to be of lesser importance.

Finally, age is of essential importance. Judith Gardiner rightly argues that gender should always be understood developmentally in terms of change over the life course and in historical rather than in static terms. While some Jewish men could share a unifying war memory that transcended class barriers, their commemoration was evidently exclusive to a certain age group. Many of the men in this study had reached their status as “full men” by the time the Nazis came to power; they were established in social and economic terms, were married, had families, and had previously adopted a militarist-nationalist canon of values that they had internalized in the war and the army. For these men, of the generation born at the end of the 19th century, it was undoubtedly more challenging to let go of their accomplishments and harder to contemplate emigrating from Germany. At the same time, one might argue that it was also somewhat less of a trial to endure

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Nazi discrimination and violence, especially in concentration camps, as these men had been hardened by military drills and trench warfare.

Thus, masculinity, like gender in general, strongly intersects with other categories of identity and only in a glued-together fashion can it offer us valuable insights into people’s past lives. As Connell argues, in order to understand gender, we must constantly go beyond gender.29

Methodology

In the following chapters, I hope to maintain a balance of scholarly breadth and depth. This study explores German-Jewish masculinities in case studies by contextualizing and historicizing German and German-Jewish masculinities, often inflected by racist and antisemitic discourses, that had emerged and consolidated in the 19th century. My study thus tries to cover a chronological as well as thematic range of topics such as German-Jewish military masculinity (Chapter 1); Nazi antisemitism and propaganda in the realm of Jewish sexuality and race (Chapter 2); the bourgeois concept of work masculinity (Chapter 3); Jewish men as husbands and fathers in Nazi Germany (Chapter 4); physical violence and its social ramifications (Chapter 5); and Jewish men’s gendered experiences and survival strategies while “illegally” living in the underground in Germany during the Second World War (Chapter 6). Structured chronologically and thematically, this study intends to project a comprehensive picture of the diversity and evolving character of Jewish masculine identities and experiences from multiple perspectives in multiple areas of gender importance and at separate times.

To realize adequate breadth and depth, this study follows Thomas Kühne’s proposed methodological approach of simultaneously working on three different layers: the cultural level of

29 Connell, *Masculinities*, 76.
discourse and ideas (Leitbilder); the level of social practices; and the level of individual subjective experiences, perceptions and identities.  

On the cultural-discursive front, my study examines the gendered nature of texts and propaganda images by Nazi racial “experts” and newspapers, which, for instance, elaborated on Jewish men’s alleged abnormal sexuality and criminality in defiling the German racial pool. On the second level, my study looks at the social implications of such cultural productions. For instance, the discursive deprivation of Jewish men’s military masculinity in newspapers and their portrayal as alleged cowards and physical weaklings led to their being banned from membership in the Wehrmacht as well as the closure of the Jewish veterans’ organization. As my methodological approach demonstrates, it was not discourses and words in the media alone that affected (or not) Jewish masculine identities, but the conversion of ideas into social practices. Above all, however, the focus is on the third, subjective level of personal experience as recorded in short-term accounts (diaries) and long-term memories (memoirs) of Jewish men and women. It examines Jewish men’s and women’s reactions, adaptations and contestations of the cultural-discursive and social-legal intrusions into the existing gender order of German-Jewish masculinity.  

To return to the example of Jewish military masculinity, it is not sufficient, I argue, to scrutinize the propaganda images that ridiculed Jewish men and legal means of exclusion from the military. It is equally important to study men’s textual representations of their feelings and bring them into a gendered framework of analysis. This individual subjective layer must not be confined to the hermeneutic study of emotions reflected in words, for we must examine the physical manifestations that followed men’s perceptions. These men did not simply write in their diaries, or years later in their memoirs, about their patriotic-nationalist feelings as former German soldiers.

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when they pinned war decorations onto their coats. Instead, such gestures were public demonstrations of their national belonging and were performed with their bodies. Gender, thus, emerges not only in the psychic, internal realm of thoughts (what did Jews think about masculinity?) but also externally through actions (what did Jewish men do?) and through bodies as sites of experience (how did bodies embody/undermine masculinity?). It is this dichotomy between the psychic-individual and the external-social that needs to be brought into congruency.

As John Tosh has argued,

Masculinity… is both a psychic and a social identity: psychic, because it is integral to the subjectivity of every male…, social, because masculinity is inseparable from peer recognition, which in turn depends on performance in the social sphere. It is the uneasy and complex relation between these two elements which explains masculinity's power to shape experience and action, often in ways beyond the conscious grasp of the participants.  

My analysis of all three layers aims to do this.

Consequently, although a wide range of sources, primary and secondary, are used, the prevailing focus is on non-fictional texts written by German Jews. Diaries and memoirs occupy a position of importance in this study, though with an inevitable caveat: this study realizes that it relies on written texts that over-represent certain groups. Diary-writing has traditionally been a middle- and upper-class exercise that proletarian, blue-collar workers tended not to engage in. To counter an ensuing hyper-focus on class-based sources, I have extensively used memoirs that were often written decades following the events and were thus usually written by elderly men and women, who regardless of their class background were determined to pass on their life stories to their descendants. Using both diaries and memoirs offers an invaluable cross-section of acculturated German Jews of all ages and different classes who lived in the Third Reich.

Introduction

The methodology of using diaries and memoirs does not come without its own problems. While diaries prevail in immediacy and bypass the caveat of hindsight, both important aspects for the historian to keep in mind, both types are constructs that, as Marion Kaplan has illustrated, can be deceptive, selective, contradictory or even false. But as Kaplan, James Young and others have emphasized, historical sources recorded by witnesses are, though constructs, not to be confused with works of fiction.\(^{32}\) In principle, diarists and memoirists try to uphold the Rankian aim of recording “how it actually was.” Moreover, whereas the dissection of the first and second layers that Kühne described may be relatively unproblematic since cultural ideas and social practices are more explicitly addressed in surviving documentary evidence (e.g. propaganda posters; trial records), the third layer, the reading of men’s experiences and perceptions and the subsequent interpretations by historians of such emotions pertaining to gender identity, is harder since few Jewish men directly addressed how their understanding of masculinity was or was not affected by the Nazi regime. Since, however, this study relies on a substantial number of memory-based texts, general patterns of similar experiences and clusters of behavior do crystallize.

Ultimately, experience remains subjective and no one can look into other people’s minds. Yet, the alternative to studying people’s experiences in the past is not to study it all, thus abandoning the crucial quest for empathetic historical understanding. Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer have asserted that memoirs often describe incisive events that the authors believe were beyond their control and responsibility.\(^{33}\) Alexandra Garbarini has illustrated how Holocaust diarists consciously quarreled with the impossibility of representing the un-representable.\(^{34}\) Some

Holocaust scholars also have doubted that true understanding of the horrific events is obtainable.\textsuperscript{35} Yet, not giving the victims a voice, which the Nazis tried to extinguish in the first place, would paradoxically result in a second victimization.\textsuperscript{36} As the eminent historian Lucien Febvre already noted during World War II: “The truth is that any attempt to reconstitute the emotional life of a given period is a task that is at one and the same time extremely attractive and frightfully difficult.”\textsuperscript{37} It is an unbridgeable challenge for the historian to convey in their words what the witness survivor struggled to represent in their own words. But representations of experiences and feelings as well as events and actions are always dependent on the texts that the historian is left with. This dissertation, therefore, provides significant space for the stories by such witnesses without making comprehensive claims to cover the entire palette of Jewish men’s experiences and their efforts to construct gender identity. I still hope to have found a workable equilibrium between subjective interpretations and objective claims.

Introduction

Argument:

German-Jewish masculinities and experiences under the Nazis are still under-researched. Assumptions that in Nazi Germany Jewish women were more amenable to change and better adapted to the new circumstance than men,\(^{38}\) that Jewish men, unlike women, “felt worthless” when they were unable to provide for their families or function as husbands and fathers,\(^{39}\) or that Jewish men’s “inability to meet accepted male obligations often had an emotionally paralyzing effect,”\(^{40}\) and that they therefore resorted to passive, depressive and suicidal behaviors can no longer be left uncommented. Though I do not question, in principle, the validity of such conclusions in many cases, this study seeks to establish a more differentiated picture and to paint a wider canvas of the Jewish male experience and gender construction in the Third Reich. Accordingly, the main argument of my dissertation is that in their attempt to defy emasculation and maintain ties to hegemonic norms and practices of masculinity, German-Jewish men experienced a profound marginalization of their masculinities while simultaneously exhibiting considerable degrees of resilience and agency. Subject to gender-specific hardship and suffering, Jewish men were and perceived themselves to be emasculated, but such configurations were momentary, situative and shifting. Jewish men could act despairingly, as historians have suggested, yet the anecdotal evidence of this dissertation shows that many German-Jewish men were equally capable of adaptation, negotiation and individual practices of resistance in order to perform, albeit in different ways, a degree of manhood.

\(^{38}\) Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 30.
Chapter 1

German Jews and Military Masculinity

1. German Jews, Military Masculinity and Antisemitism before 1933

We have to fight with all our energy against the odium of cowardice and weakness that is cast upon us. We want to show that every member … is equal to every Christian … in any physical exercise. Physical strength and agility will increase self-confidence and self-respect, and in the future, nobody will be ashamed of being a Jew.¹

As part of the process of becoming a unified nation in the 19th century, the various German states professionalized their militaries. The idea of a civilian army consisting of conscripted young males was intricately tied to modern conceptions of citizenship. Enlightenment philosophy of the 18th century viewed the (male) individual no longer as a passive subject who needed governance by absolutist monarchs or religious authorities, but as a participant in a state that required the citizen’s active contribution for it to prosper. As a quid pro quo, European states began a process of granting men some gender-exclusive citizenship rights in return for their military service.

Over the course of the 19th century, the German state militaries increased their visibility and importance in society. As Ute Frevert has argued, the revolutionary message of conscription was the blurring of borders between the military and civilian spheres.² Men’s mandatory service in the army resulted in a type of military socialization in the barracks that affected the structures and mentality of civil society. As the young male conscripts entered the barracks for one to three years, they began to learn military values that they later would carry into civilian life where they

¹ “Manifesto of Viadrine.” In October 1886, twelve Jewish students in Breslau published a manifesto, announcing the establishment of Viadrine, the first exclusively Jewish fraternity in Germany. Quoted in Gregory Caplan, “Wicked Sons, German Heroes: Jewish Soldiers, Veterans and Memoirs of World War I in Germany” (PhD Dissertation, The University of Washington, 2001), 38.
would have a sustained cultural effect. Recruits were taught discipline, punctuality, orderliness, respect for the law, courage, valor, stoicism and strong will. Through the state’s introduction of symbols, rituals and language of national belonging, such as the Iron Cross (a military award medal), a cult of the fatherland developed that, according to Karen Hagemann, culminated in a new and heightened nationalism at a time of German (Prussian) military victories in the second half of the 19th century. With the military’s increase in social prestige and attractiveness for young males, a convincing argument was made that German men served in the military for the protection of the (newly imagined) nation.

Military service not only correlated to the concept of citizenship, but also had significant ramifications in the realm of gender relations. The coming of age of subjects as autonomous citizens, and the needs of the state for stronger and more efficiently organized armies, had a strikingly gendered dimension. It amalgamated men, who due to their assumed physical capabilities and mental strength were codified as the proper bearers of arms, into a new and distinct social group, the citizen-soldier. As part of a character-building experience, the conscript entered the barracks as a young man and left as a “complete man,” a matured citizen, who was prepared for an adult male life. This created a rift between the genders, or as Hagemann claims, a sex difference that surpassed religion, age and race: “Universal male citizenship and general conscription, and the exclusion of women from them, were viable in making sexual difference a prime difference.” As celebrated defenders of the new fatherland, men of different religious,

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Racial, geographic, and class backgrounds were symbolically united and elevated in importance as the nation’s new soldier-heroes. Military service, thus, created within men a sense of national belonging and political importance and significantly contributed to the gender identity construction of military masculinity.6

Seeking social inclusion and acculturation as well as economic improvement, starting in the late 18th century the majority of German Jews had come to accept and aspire to the idea of emancipation and notions of German citizenship (Bürgertum) with the full palette of commensurate rights and duties. This included acceptance of conscription and participation in the citizen-army. For German-Jewish men, the army became a keystone in their civil and gender identity.7 German citizenship was constructed as a privilege to be earned rather than a right of birth.8 In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the law stipulated that men could not vote until the age of twenty-four and first had to fulfill their military service, which started at age twenty-one and lasted three years. According to Christa Hämmerle, the law of 1907 furthermore excluded all those men from suffrage who tried to evade their duty to serve through draft resistance. “It thus defined military service clearly as a precondition for political rights and full male citizenship…The law rested on the motto: duties first.”9

German Jews, particularly the more liberal elements, accepted and internalized the idea of an exclusively male sphere of the military, following a process of modernization, embourgeoisement and secularization. German Jews internalized the discourse of serving in the

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6 Ibid., 13.
7 Frevert, A Nation in Barracks, 161.
military in the hope of proving (and improving) their physical aptitude as soldiers, and, more importantly, their worthiness as German citizens. Through service to the state, German Jews sought to gain bargaining power for legal emancipation and thereby to advance their social inclusion into German society. As the manifesto by the fraternity students of Viadrine suggests, following legal emancipation in 1871 Jewish men intensified their efforts to demonstrate their adherence to the core values that emanated from the military into German society: physical prowess, discipline, perseverance, obedience, and strong will. Gregory Caplan has termed the Jewish entrance into the military sphere (which traditional Jewish orthodoxy had long rejected) as the highest form of Jewish acculturation. The Jewish longing for social inclusion and cultural


11 In traditional Jewish culture, rabbinic authorities rejected the valorization of war making, dueling and romantic love as goyim naches, or games of the gentile. Instead, Jewish religious authorities made a virtue of necessity, seeing power in submission. As an alternative paradigm, in religious discourses up until the 19th century, following the pious example of rabbis and devoting themselves to Torah study were portrayed as the proper gender role for men. See Caplan, “Wicked Sons,” 13. The acceptance by Jews of the military as an important social institution also needs to be seen in the context of antisemitic images of the effeminate Jew that had been propagated by non-Jewish writers but that were also partially internalized and affirmed by Jewish writers and reformers such as Max Nordau and Walter Rathenau at the end of the century. What these antisemitic texts and the Jewish reactions had in common was an attack on the image of the ideal man in religious Judaism. According to 19th-century neo-orthodox Jewish thinkers and rabbis such as Samuel Hirsch, the image of the ideal man was one who was entirely devoted to Torah study and who rejected appeals of the public sphere of politics and the economy. In Jewish orthodoxy, spiritual strength and intellectual power were considered as the highest ideals and superior to the rather primitive appeal of physical strength and military service. The images of the erudite scholarly Jew – that anti-Semites and writers like Nordau and Rathenau equally addressed as effeminately degenerate and that scholars like Sander Gilman and Daniel Boyarin have commendably researched – became less appealing during rapid modernization at the fin de siècle, as Benjamin M. Baader rightly pointed out. See Benjamin M. Baader, “Jewish Difference and the Feminine Spirit of Judaism in mid-19th century Germany,” in Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender and History eds. Benjamin Maria Baader, Sharon Gillerman & Paul Lerner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 60. It is therefore crucial to study the social history of German Jewry, the behaviors and attitudes that motivated German-Jewish men to increasingly conform to the military value system in German society. For a similar critique, see Deborah Hertz, “Männlichkeit und Melancholie im Berlin der Biedermeierzeit,” in Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte als Geschlechtergeschichte, eds. Stefanie Schüller-Springorum & Kirsten Heinsohn (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 286-290.

acculturation was reciprocated by calls from non-Jews who demanded that Jews partake in fulfilling civic duties. The writer Ernst Schaeffer claimed in 1897: “Military recruitment is needed, so it is in the interest of Jewry itself to eagerly fulfill the duty of the soldier: obligation to itself and the German state by taking full advantage of the military as a school of masculinity.”\textsuperscript{13}

The Jewish adaptation to and construction of military masculinity, however, did not originate in an uncontested vacuum, detached from other cultural and social developments in German society. While German Jews had tried to find ways of acculturating to a “military spirit” that Nahum Goldmann defined in his \textit{Der Geist des Militarismus}\textsuperscript{14} (1915), non-Jewish politicians, scholars, and writers had started to raise doubts on the issue of Jewish suitability for the military in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Anthropologists and medical experts argued over Jews’ physical features and their mental constitution that supposedly deviated from the normative gentile German. As part of the consolidation of medical and racial science in the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Jewish men were coded as un-manly and effeminate. Indices for neurological disorders (nervousness, hysteria, passivity, cowardice) as well as physical features (flat feet, small composition, obesity, and weak stature) placed Jewish men in a corner with women who were deemed to suffer from similar medical symptoms and physical deficiencies. Klaus Hödl has argued that due to alleged quantifiable bodily characteristics and certain predispositions for diseases, Jewish men lacked the mental attributes required of soldiers, a strong will, skill of subordination to authority, discipline, and patriotism. In short, Jews were perceived to have much in common with women, who were excluded from the military, and thus barred from engaging in politics and acquiring citizenship.

\textsuperscript{14} See footnote 11.
The image of the outsider, the effeminate, un-soldierly Jew, therefore, constituted a central element of antisemitic discourses around the turn of the century that would permeate the Third Reich.\(^\text{15}\)

With the scientific consolidation of Jewish difference and inferiority, an “inaccessible integration” of Jews into German society and culture was discursively legitimated. The dissemination of antisemitic imageries enjoyed a growing popularity in German society and reached a wide audience, as caricatures of emasculated, un-soldierly Jewish men, typically in newspapers and magazines, were widely shared in coffeehouses and public venues.\(^\text{16}\) Such figurative language crystallized into stereotypes, depicting Jewish men as weak, diminished men (Männlein) who shied away from hard physical labor and military service.\(^\text{17}\) As the masculine identity of Jewish men was questioned, due to alleged physical and mental inferiorities, they were socially excluded from the spiritual community of military-formed men and thereby from the nation altogether.\(^\text{18}\) The pamphlet Israel im Heere (1879), which appeared in several editions, reported that

Jewish men lack bodily strength and active temperament… Their entire skeleton is defective. The breast is not broad and is arched, shoulder not straight and flat, neck and head not upright… It is an annually recurring affair that the Jews offer a much smaller contingent of usable military recruits than the rest of the population, and they make up a highly disproportionate fraction of those who cannot complete marches and maneuvers… Such physical inferiority is rarely the foundation of warrior-like bravery.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{15}\) Klaus Hödl, Die Pathologisierung des jüdischen Körpers im Fin-de-Siecle (Vienna: Pickus Verlag, 1997), 158, 168-175. See also Klaus Hödl, “Genderbestimmungen im Spannungsfeld von Fremd- und Selbstzuschreibung: Der verweichlichte Jude im diskursiven Spannungsfeld im Zentralslawischen Fin-de-Siecle,” in Antisemitismus und Geschlecht. Von maskulinierten Jüdinnen und effeminierten Juden und anderen Geschlechterbildern, ed. Gender Killer AG (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2005), 88-89.


\(^{17}\) Ibid., 94.


\(^{19}\) H. Naudh, “Israel im Heere,” in Die Deutsche Wacht: Monatsschrift für nationale Entwicklung (1879), 12-14, quoted in Caplan, “Wicked Sons,” 38.
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Fig 1. Antisemitic postcard, 1906.

Built on the ideologies of scientific racism and cultural nationalism, various forms of antisemitic agitation led to German Jews’ classification as inherently different from Germans. Sander Gilman has demonstrated that due to the alleged inherent difference in the Jewish voice (*Mauscheln*), Jews were even accused of not mastering the German national language properly, another central requirement for being German.\(^{20}\) With fixated, racially-defined body features and different character traits, Jews were seen as immutable and therefore irrevocably alien to the German nation. In this conservative parlance, the ideal German, the citizen-soldier, was thus an unattainable goal for Jewish men. Due to their military unsuitability, German-Jewish men were denied the gender identity of military masculinity.

By the turn of the century, antisemitic caricatures had become a strong weapon in influencing attitudes towards Jews. Particularly following Germany’s defeat in World War I, accusations of Jewish war-shirking manifested themselves among conservative, nationalist associations. Authors such as Alfred Roth, who under the pseudonym Otto Armin wrote *Die Juden im Heer* (1919), or in periodicals such as the *Kreuzzeitung* repeatedly accused German Jews of not having participated staunchly in the war as German Christian men had done.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{21}\) Otto Armin, *Die Juden Im Heer: eine statistische Untersuchung nach amtlichen Quellen* (Munich, 1919).
A scapegoat in the form of a backstabbing Jewish traitor was invented and was stubbornly kept alive by antisemitic demagogues until it found official sanction in the Third Reich. In his 1925 *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler charged Jews with having avoided front line service entirely: “Nearly every clerk was Jewish and nearly every Jew a clerk.”\(^{22}\) The connections between national citizenship, masculine gender identity and militarism started to disintegrate for Jewish men at a time when military values again began to recapture social momentum in the late 1920s.

The marginalization of Jewish men in the cultural-military realm, was, however, not a field left undefended by German Jews. Starting in the late 19\(^{th}\) century, Jewish associations such as the *Centralverein Deutscher Bürger jüdischen Glaubens* had taken it upon themselves to respond to the various discourses and imageries of Jewish military ineptness. Jewish men, in response to antisemitism prevalent in places such as universities, founded their own Jewish student fraternities (such as the *Viadrine*) and thereby carved out their own sites to perform military masculinity through the act of dueling, a highly-gendered practice that aimed at proving honor and status through physical strength, agility, discipline and bravery. Dueling in particular provided new

opportunities for Jewish men to use gendered rituals to assert their own masculinity in a collective, group setting.\textsuperscript{23}

In a similar vein, Jewish intellectuals and reformers such as Max Nordau (1848-1923), who coined the term \textit{Muskeljudentum} (muscular Jewry), advocated a change in bodily outlook and ethical makeup. Some Jewish writers like Walter Rathenau or Otto Weininger in his \textit{Geschlecht und Charakter} (1903) internalized the gendered antisemitism and portrayed the Jewish man as a foil to the Germanic military hero. Nordau, however, saw it as imperative for Jews to physically and morally regenerate through athleticism. Nordau reasoned that the formerly “ghettoized Jew” had, due to his forced, centuries-long physical containment, inactivity and excessive focus on religious study, become weak and degenerated. The discursive shift toward the world of militarized sports and athleticism (\textit{Turnen}) was meant to form a new type of Jew who was able to successfully defend himself against antisemitic assaults. Internalizing military values of mainstream society but also some of the antisemitic discourses (like Jewish physical inferiority), Jews established their own clubs and chose names of Jewish war heroes from antiquity like \textit{Bar Kochba} (a Jew who had revolted against the Roman Empire). These male-exclusive associations were used for regenerating the Jewish body and cultivating a martial manliness characterized by the soldierly values of bravery, courage and aggression.\textsuperscript{24} Women only played a minor role in the early efforts of transforming the Jewish body.\textsuperscript{25} In the nationalist-oriented sports associations, young Jewish males who had not experienced World War I were to become enthused for the same military and

masculine ideals that the older veterans had grown up with and would rebut the stereotypical image of the “crooked Jew.”

Whether it was physically embodied and performed in sports clubs and fraternities or embedded in textual discourses such as memoirs, Jews idealized barracks life and trench warfare and assigned militarism a hegemonic status in society. Many German men, including Jewish men, had come to pride themselves on their participation in military training and service, even after the war was lost in 1918. For an entire male generation, the military had become a school of life, a point of identification that men would carry with them in their post-military civilian lives including the Third Reich. Nationalism and masculinity had become deeply entangled.

Despite instances of antisemitism (such as the infamous Jew Count of 1916 when the Army High Command relented to antisemitic pressure and agreed to conduct an investigation pertaining to the number of Jewish soldiers stationed at the front) most Jewish men recalled their frontline experiences as a time of inclusion, fraternizing, establishing ties of comradeship and building mutual respect. They remembered having been treated as equals and perceived themselves as patriotic Germans who, like other men, had devotedly contributed to the German war effort. Like their gentile peers, Jewish men had praised the values that connotated militarism without reveling in violence for its own sake. Instead, they viewed military accomplishments as proof of their manliness which in turn demonstrated their worth as Germans. One’s military record and its associated symbols were codified as means to the end of unifying military masculinity, Jewish identity and German citizenship.

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2. State Intervention and the End of Jewish Military Masculinity, 1933-1945

Beginning in 1933, efforts to dishonor and marginalize by “de-militarizing” German Jews were perpetuated and intensified by the state. While in the immediate postwar era such accusations might have attracted, appealed to and satisfied certain minority segments of society – such as disillusioned war veterans, populist politicians and conservative-völkisch associations – in the Third Reich, with a renewed emphasis on the military as a socially important institution, antisemitic propaganda became canonic.

Antisemitic newspapers launched blunt attacks on Jewish men’s wartime service. Under the title “Jewish Frontline Soldiers?,” the Völkische Beobachter asserted in April 1933:

Front soldiers. This is the newest catchphrase... Suddenly, all Jews are frontline soldiers. We old war veterans know that the Jews ... even in their military units were most of the time behind a desk, employed in logistics (Baggage)... If they had the bad luck of being temporarily stationed at the front, they generally spent very little time there, but found themselves sooner or later further behind the front or even at home (Heimat). The fact that a few Jews died at the front is certainly not an extraordinary merit of the Jewish race. After all, there was general conscription and not every Jew was able to shirk... Some even had the ambition to become an officer and then move up into a better position at home. In this time, Jews did not only enjoy all the same rights as German citizens, but also procured additional major...
privileges… But we will have even less use for the people of Moses in the defense of our German soil than in the world war...

These are Jewish frontline soldiers? Let’s not fall for the old trick of the Centralverein with its pamphlets “Jewish war veterans,” “Jewish physicians,” “Jewish intellectuals”… Now everyone is a war veteran; now they fetch their Iron Crosses which they had illegally acquired (erschoben haben). Now they pride themselves in their war wounds and the dead in order to capitalize on them… It is impossible to determine who the few Jewish war veterans, based on Aryan blood mixing (Blutvermischung), were… For fifteen years they have spit on (bespieen) war service, scorned it and dragged it into the mud.30

Literary and graphic assaults like the one by the Völkische Beobachter intended to disparage German Jewry in toto. However, the specific accusations that Jews had not contributed importantly to the German war effort and should therefore not be included in the German Volksgemeinschaft, the people’s community, had strongly gendered connotations. The lack of military virtues made Jewish men into war shirkers, cowards and traitors. Due to their un-German character, German Jewish men were denied Germanness, and their betrayal in World War I made all Jews decidedly un-German. The tale that Jewish soldiers had spent most of the time in the war behind desks or even at home suggested that Jewish men had much in common with women and the domestic sphere. The desk was used as a metaphor for the non-physical, secretarial work that was a common vocation for women. The metaphor alluded to the notion that war-making was a male honor and responsibility, while living a safe distance apart from military action was a privilege reserved for women, children and the elderly – one that was misused by the Jews. The Nazis chose to attack and degrade German Jews where Jewish men felt most emotional and were culturally most vulnerable, the cultural realm of military masculinity.

The marginalization of Jewish men occurred as part of a relational process in which German society witnessed a revitalization of military norms and values. Historians have rightly

1. German Jews and Military Masculinity

outlined how the Nazis constructed the image of a society at arms. The idealization of war itself and men as the role model soldiers were aggressively propagated. The Nazis perceived the years of the Weimar Republic as a time of chaos, instability and disorder. It was seen as a time of political pacifism and perceived weakness in the international theatre of politics, of social immorality and cultural degeneration: in short, a combination of national ills that the Nazis accounted for by a lack of a strong, patriarchal government, the vanishing importance of military virtues in society, and the feminization of society altogether.31 As Thomas Kühne has shown, the idealized community of comrades, with its myths and its visionary extension into a national Volksgemeinschaft, was meant to heal the wounds of the past and overcome the turmoil of the present: “If only we had more comradeship, as we once had, suggested many papers and speakers, we could solve all of our problems.”32 Only a return to the militaristic values of order and rules could salvage Germany. The Nazi utopia of a well-functioning nation was thus militaristic in outlook and concomitantly heavily masculinized.

The masculinization of social role models resulted in the construction of male soldierly heroes who were presented as the manliest of men.33 Raewyn Connell has suggested that the Nazi regime was strongly gendered and, in its public face, intensely masculinized: “National Socialism presented to the world a seamless front of dominant masculinity: hard, decisive, armed, modern, organized – the soldier image of the SA man.”34 In the Third Reich there was an increased presence in the German media of the Aryan male body with strong connotations of physical prowess and

33 Hagemann, “German Heroes,” 116.
militarism. The new images of the ideal German male as a man of action and deed, of aggression and force, had developed into a conformist canon of militarist values and part of the general cultural norms in Germany of the 1930s. The new hero was the SA trooper and the Wehrmacht soldier.

![Poster by Hans Schweitzer (pseudonym Mjölnir)](image)

**Fig. 4** The guarantee of German military strength. Poster by Hans Schweitzer (pseudonym Mjölnir)

The militarization of society coincided with legal steps to emasculate Jewish men in addition to the discursive efforts. The Nazis excluded Jews from all things military. In March 1935, Hitler re-introduced mandatory conscription for men. With the founding of the Wehrmacht, German Jews were by law excluded. Despite some major protests (see next sub-chapter), the

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36 Thomas Kühne, *Kameradschaft: Die Soldaten des nationalsozialistischen Krieges und das 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 85. As an example, the famous German encyclopedia *Das Herder Lexikon* defined the term “man” in 1933 thus: “True manhood includes strength, bravery, honest decisions (without cunning excuses), farsightedness, initiative, objectivity in regard to people and things (without avoiding reality) and readiness for the serious and dangerous situations in life. Dominant participation in public affairs and the struggle to fulfill the task of the community are the man’s way. By being a warrior with the task of defending and securing the community body through the exercise of authority, assistance with education and the assumption of leadership and governing roles, the man experiences his natural precedence. The man forges the state, the hardness of which corresponds to the hardness of his own being, bears historical conflicts and wages war.” See Ute Frevert, *Mann und Weib, Weib und Mann: Geschlechterdifferenzen in der Moderne* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1995), 33. Trans. S. Huebel. See also Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* (Minnesota: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987).

37 In violation of the Treaty of Versailles, which had stipulated that Germany was only allowed to maintain a 100,000-men-strong army (*Reichswehr*), consisting of infantry only and to be used only for defensive purposes, Hitler inaugurated a new German army, the Wehrmacht, in March 1935, initiating a massive military build-up of the German navy, air force and regular army. The promulgation of a new army was accompanied by the propaganda efforts of
Nazi state remained steadfast in its attempt to thereby dishonor and emasculate Jewish men. Because the Nazis paid great attention to military traditions and symbols, the newly founded Wehrmacht was propagated with much medial fanfare and propaganda. The rejection of Jews was especially humiliating to Jewish men who had come to identify with and internalize the military values of Wilhelmine Germany. Besides the ruling that German Jews – who were no longer German citizens following the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935 – were not worthy of being part of a German national army, further discriminatory measures included prohibiting German Jews from possessing guns. The Gestapo and other local and federal government agencies argued that Jews with guns would endanger (gefährden) the German population.38 The “untrustworthy” Jew was depicted as a potential aggressor and murderer – an illogical image that stood in contradiction to the image of the war shirker being afraid of violence and incapable of using a gun but that nevertheless had an immediate and dramatic effect on German Jews. Even sabers and rapiers had to be surrendered to the police eventually.39 Symbolically, Jewish men, who were denied the acquisition of new weapons while weapons they already possessed were confiscated, were emasculated. While the new German hero was the young male in SA or Wehrmacht uniform, Jewish men were made to look weak and defenseless, antonyms to the German ideal of military masculinity.

In addition to the physical exclusion of Jews from the military and the prohibition for Jews to own weapons, the state used further symbolic ways to deprive German Jewish men of military

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gender identity. During the Heldengedenktag, the annual commemoration of the fallen in World War I, Jewish participation was outright forbidden and the inscription of names of Jewish war casualties onto memorials was no longer allowed.\textsuperscript{40} To the consternation of many Jews, Jewish names were even removed from existing war memorials.\textsuperscript{41} Jews were also forbidden to use the German flag, another symbol of military importance. The Jewish veterans’ organization (Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten, RjF), founded in 1919, was from 1936 onwards prohibited from associating itself with all things military and from advocating for its members and their families. Other Jewish nationalist associations (though miniscule in membership numbers) that identified with militarist or even fascist principles, such as the Black Squad (Schwarzes Fähnlein), the Association of German National Jews (Vereinigung deutsch-nationaler Juden, VdnJ), the New Front of the German Jews (Neue Front der deutschen Juden) and the German Vanguard (Deutscher Vortrupp, Gefolgschaft der Juden), were outright banned.\textsuperscript{42} The wearing of sport badges and wartime medals was also outlawed. Hunting licenses were no longer issued, explosives such as fireworks no longer sold to Jews.\textsuperscript{43} The formerly proud German-Jewish war veterans and the younger generation of Jewish men who through physical exercise and athleticism had adopted and internalized an equivalent militaristic ethos were unequivocally turned into un-soldierly pariahs.

\textsuperscript{40}Walk, \textit{Das Sonderrecht der Juden in Deutschland}, 114 & 137.  
\textsuperscript{41}Max Rosengart, \textit{Diaries}, LBINY, AR25053, 5.  
\textsuperscript{42}These splinter groups were typically founded on the initiative of individual veterans and reforms such as Max Naumann, Hans-Joachim Schoeps and Arnold Matzner. They all had in common a strong anti-republican, anti-Zionist and anti-communist ideologies and endorsed the fascist ideal of the leadership principle with unconditional obedience and pledge for the fulfillment of duty for the Fatherland. Max Naumann, founder of the VdnJ, according to Gregory Caplan, implored his followers “to overlook the regrettable side-effects of Nazism” and endorse the Nazi regime. These groups however, had significantly lower membership – typically in the low hundreds – compared to the RjF. See Caplan, “Wicked Sons,” 258-260 & 300.  
\textsuperscript{43}Walk, \textit{Das Sonderrecht der Juden in Deutschland}, 259 & 390.
3. The Jewish Experience: Military Masculinity in the Third Reich

a) Jewish collective responses

In their diaries and memoirs, many German Jews perceptively observed social changes and commented on social life in the Third Reich. Some testified to the perception of an increased militarization of society. In her 1930’s diary, the physician Hertha Nathorff (1895-1993) of Berlin expressed her repulsion, noticing ever more proud soldiers walking around with their brides and naming Germans “a uniform-friendly people. Exercising and parading, this is the new time.”\(^4^4\) The businessman Walter Tausk (1890-1941) of Breslau also reflected in his diary that strong SA formations of eighteen-year-old “snotty-nosed brats” (Rotzlöffel) were marching every day with much fanfare and equipped with guns.\(^4^5\)

Paradoxically, while some Jewish observers were evidently appalled, if not terrified, by a society that was armed to the teeth and that had just de facto legalized antisemitism, the majority of Jewish records rather testify to a welcoming of a strong German military and the return of military values in society. Most Jewish war veterans accepted the Nazi renewal of soldierly masculinity because many could directly identify with such images through their own previous experience in the army and find a compatible solution to sustain their Jewishness and German patriotism. Some thinkers of the Jewish liberal milieu, according to Avraham Barkai, regarded their Jewish origins in ethnic terms, seeing Jews as one among many distinct ethnic-religious groups or Stämme in Germany, similar to Catholic Bavarians for instance, that together formed a coherent German identity.\(^4^6\) The example of Julius Meyer represents the standpoint of many

\(^4^6\) Avraham Barkai, “Between Deutschtum and Judentum: Ideological Controversies within the Centralverein,” in *In Search of Jewish Community: Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918-1933*, eds. Derek Penslar & Michael Brenner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 78.
German Jews – men in particular. In his memoir, the author reminisced that many German Jews had stayed in Nazi Germany because of their deep-rootedness in Germany which they and their ancestors had acquired and proven in military battle. Because of their identification with military and nationalist values, they simply could not leave Germany.\textsuperscript{47} Kurt Baumann (b. 1907) recalled that his father was opposed to emigration because he was certain he would be needed again in the next war.\textsuperscript{48} Willy Cohn noted in his diary that he was ready to fight for Germany after war had broken out again in 1939.\textsuperscript{49} Alfred Wolff (1898-1981), economist and businessman, remembered: “I lived in a country for which to fight I had given my parents sleepless nights, for which 12,000 Jews had been killed during action in the war 1914 to 1918.”\textsuperscript{50} Palpably, the demilitarization and the associated dishonoring of Jews in the media and by law was a momentous occasion – in a negative sense – in the lives of Jewish men who made explicit reference to their past sacrifices and continued believing in nationalist, militarist values.

Like their gentile counterparts, the Jewish ex-soldiers of World War I had been exposed to military values for years and they carried their caches of values and virtues into the postwar era. Military service had become a common experience that united men and set them apart from others. It provided a set of criteria against which men could judge themselves and their peers.\textsuperscript{51} The Jewish veterans’ organization RjF (Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten) was founded in 1919 in order to continue cultivating a collective masculine identity that orbited around the experience in, and the values of, the military. Leo Löwenstein (1877-1956), former captain in the war and founder of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Julius Meyer, \textit{Verworrene Erinnerungen}, LBINY, ME439 MM55, 7.
\item Ken Baumann, \textit{Memoirs}, LBINY, ME35 MM5, 71.
\item Cohn, \textit{No Justice in Germany, The Breslau Diaries, 1933-1945}, 275.
\item Alfred Wolf, \textit{Memoirs}, LBINY, MM82, 229.
\item Brian Feltman, \textit{The Stigma of Surrender – German Prisoners, British Captors and Manhood in the Great War and Beyond} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 16.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
1. German Jews and Military Masculinity

*RjF*, proclaimed that it was the highest goal to stand up as men to the challenge (*mannhaft die Stirn bieten*) and protect the honor of Jewish veterans.52

According to their own perceptions, having proven their loyalty, fulfilled their duty to the nation and exhibited military virtues such as bravery and courage, Jewish ex-soldiers tried to preserve their accomplishments through an organized association whose influence would penetrate the general public. Through public acts of commemoration and attempts to educate the general public about the Jewish contribution in the war, the *RjF* actively sought to defy antisemitic attacks and simultaneously construct an image of a Jewish soldierly masculinity. In the 1920s, the *RjF* had started to promote military values within the sports and youth organizations that were attached to it.53 The members of the *RjF* believed themselves to embody a masculine ideal, and by incorporating the symbols and imageries of a Jewish military tradition into the discourse of German militarism they infused the German-Jewish commitment to self-improvement with the values born of military front service.54

In the 1930s, the *RjF* expanded its scope, trying to represent the entirety of German Jewry. The *RjF* believed that the predicament that German Jews were in could only be solved through faith in military attitudes and virtues. For this reason, it launched a strategic publicity campaign, printing millions of pamphlets, postcards, and memorial books that listed German-Jewish accomplishments, including *Die Jüdischen Gefallenen des deutschen Heeres, der deutschen Marine und der deutschen Schutztruppen, 1914-1918* (1932); *Gefallene deutsche Juden: Frontbriefe, 1914-1918* (1935); and *Heroische Gestalten jüdischen Stammes* (1937). This process

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53 The *RjF* believed that “athletic training would foster military masculinity, physical exercise, subordination to communal goals, obedience, self-discipline, decisiveness, presence of mind, general command of the body, dexterity, agility, courage, bravery, cold-bloodedness, toughness, endurance, training to reason and moderation. Sport is battle!” See Caplan, “Wicked Sons,”, 164.

54 Ibid., 161.
of associating German Jews with the fatherland and their contribution to the German military and to the war effort reflected a continuity of reactions to antisemitic agitation. The *RjF* printed letters from the front, for instance, in 1935, following the establishment of the Wehrmacht and the concomitant exclusion of Jews from it. By publishing such works, the *RjF* and its members sought relief from their deprivation and perceived humiliation. Holding on to cultural reference points – soldierly duty and honor – helped them to preserve a sense of national as well as gender identity. Felix Theilhaber’s bestseller on Jewish World War I pilots, *Jüdische Flieger im Weltkrieg: ein Buch der Erinnerung*, which had come out in 1919, was reprinted in 1935 due to popular (Jewish) demand.\(^55\)

Most significant, however, were the frequent articles published in the Jewish weekly newspaper *Der Schild*. In them, the authors repeatedly referenced the military, World War I and the Jewish contribution to both. In a general statement on the title page, Leo Löwenstein wrote on January 26, 1934 that the *RjF* had learned that “every community, as its basis for its very existence, has the necessity for soldierly education (*wehrhafte Erziehung*) in order to create a soldierly and disciplined spirit… No regulation (*Regelung*) can stop us from avowing ourselves to the German nation and home (*Heimat*) for which we have risked our lives…”\(^56\) Clearly, the *RjF* and affiliated associations were active in the perpetuation of nationalist, patriotic ideals that were meant to further a sense of national belonging of Jews in Germany. Through public acts, such as their own commemorative ceremonies for the fallen soldiers,\(^57\) the *RjF* constructed a German-Jewish identity

\(^{55}\) Though there was an increased output of such works in the 1930s in response to Nazi antisemitism, it is important to note that such efforts represent a continuity and that efforts to counteract antisemitic allegations of Jewish war shirking were made in the 1920s. See for instance Heinemann Stern, *Angriff und Abwehr: Ein Handbuch der Judenfrage* (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 1924).

\(^{56}\) Leo Löwenstein, “Ich bin ein Deutscher! Ich bin ein Jude!”, “*Der Schild*, January 26, 1934.

\(^{57}\) In its December 17, 1933 issues, *Der Schild* lists all the locations of Germany where *RjF* chapters had commemorated Jewish war victims.
that was meant to encompass and protect all Jews, but that was closely based on the gendered conceptions of the masculine military ideal.\textsuperscript{58}

![Fig. 5. First pages of Fallen German Jews](image)

The efforts of the RjF shared many attitudes with other (liberal and integrationist) Jewish organizations and institutions. Influential liberal Jewish periodicals and newspapers with high print circulations, such as the \textit{C.V. Zeitung}, echoed – albeit in a more muted tone and with less frequency – acceptance of military values. In an article of April 6, 1934, the \textit{C.V. Zeitung} asked its readers to remain steadfast and to persevere: “Our fathers have endured their fate with heroism and inner dignity. Let us learn from them.”\textsuperscript{59} Even more explicit was the article a week later, arguing that in 1914 a German national unity had been forged; 100,000 Jewish soldiers participated in the war; 12,000 died; these were not exceptions (\textit{Einzelschicksale}) but proof of communal values (\textit{Gemeinschaftswerte}) that all Germans shared. The duty to serve (\textit{Wehrpflicht}) was the noblest expression of citizenship.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Interestingly, what the RjF did not refer to in its works were the wounded. In the postwar attempt of constructing a heroic memory, the RjF adapted to the Nazi approach of publicly celebrating the soldierly ideal of the young, healthy and strong male. As Derek Penslar has noticed, in the effort to create the ideal Jewish male, the wounded – physically through bodily disfiguration or mentally through war traumata – were never part of the narrative. Thus, the actual combat of Jews, with all the horrific details, the atrocities, the violence and injuries they had experienced and that were part of a military experience - were effectively marginalized and not part of the response strategy. They did not fit the general, social trend of celebrating a military masculinity of dominant, strong and successful men. See Derek Penslar, \textit{Jews and the Military: A History} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 181 & 184.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Die C.V. Zeitung}, 6. April 1933, p. 117.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Die C.V. Zeitung}, 13. April, 1933, p. 130.
Strikingly, the language of German nationalism, patriotism and militarism was not a temporary phenomenon on the periphery of German-Jewish society but penetrated the mainstream of Jewish thought and social life. In the early years of the Third Reich, having served in the military was still considered an honorable, noble component that constituted Jewish masculinity.

Besides its media campaign to counter the increased marginalization of Jews from society, the RjF requested privileged treatment for its members by the German government. It directly advocated for its members by establishing a line of communication with German government offices and even with President von Hindenburg and Hitler. Its three specific goals were: a) to prevent economic harm and maintain employment for its members; b) to prevent harm for the families of war veterans (including their children and spouses); and c) to advocate for a strong Jewish presence in the German military. The first goal was realized through the intervention of President von Hindenburg when the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (Wiederherstellung des Berufsbefamten) was introduced in April 1933. The law mandated the forced dismissal of Jewish and politically unreliable civil servants, but exemptions were made for any veteran and civil servant whose father or son had been killed in the war. Clearly, preferential treatment of some groups of German Jews was legitimated by the elevated status that the Nazis still ascribed to Jewish men who were connected to the military.

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61 Dunker, *Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*, 133.
62 The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service was passed on April 7, 1933. Its intention was to dismiss Jewish state employees as well as so-called politically unreliable individuals. In practice, the law enabled the Nazis to dismiss Jews and politicians and members of the Social-Democratic and Communist parties. Exemptions were made for anyone who had been in continuous employment since at least August 1914, or who had participated in the war, or who had lost a relative (son, father) in the war.
To obtain such an exemption, was, however, a high hurdle to jump. The notary Karl Friedländer (b. 1882) remembered the confusion when the law came into effect.\textsuperscript{63} The lawyer and notary Siegfried Neumann (b. 1895) recalled that the Nazis made it clear soon enough that in order to qualify for an exemption, the male candidate had to actually submit evidence of having participated in at least one actual battle (\textit{Kriegshandlung}).\textsuperscript{64} The construction of Jewish military masculinity was thereby instantly re-affirmed, while so-called Jewish war shirkers and “desk employees” who had worked in the army in administrative functions (even as physicians) were exempted from the exemption. Indoctrinated by their own propaganda, the Nazis probably anticipated that most applications for exemption would fail as they presupposed that most Jewish men had not been enlisted in the army and certainly did not participate in any frontline battle. According to Saul Friedländer, however, the initial application of the civil service laws was “relatively mild.” For instance, of the 4585 Jewish lawyers and 717 judges in Germany employed in 1933, 3167 and 336 respectively remained in their posts due to their military service records (or because they had been employed prior to August 1914).\textsuperscript{65} The \textit{RJF} gained further privileges relating to the second goal of protecting veterans and their families. For a number of years, veterans’ children were exempted from the law against “overcrowding” in German schools. Peter Gay (1923-2015) recalled that due to his father’s wartime service and injury, he was spared a dismissal in 1933.\textsuperscript{66}

While the \textit{RJF} could realize some temporary, yet important gains, it could not reach its third objective. The establishment of the Wehrmacht in 1934 resulted in the more patriotic


\textsuperscript{64} Siegfried Neumann, “Memoir,” in \textit{Sie durften nicht mehr Deutsche sein: Jüdischer Alltag in Selbstzeugnissen, 1933-1938}, eds. Margarete Limberg und Hubert Rübsaat (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1990), 76.


\textsuperscript{66} Peter Gay, \textit{My German Question: Growing up in Nazi Berlin} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 60.
members of the Jewish communities in Germany rejoicing and giving ardent support. Hans-Joachim Schoeps, founder of another pro-military Jewish organization, stated with pathos:

We young German Jews feel compelled to express our satisfaction with this step. Just as our forefathers fulfilled their duty to the Fatherland in 1914-1918, so are we prepared today for military service, in loyalty to our motto: ready for Germany.\textsuperscript{67}

As part of identifying with the military, the RjF again requested Hindenburg’s support. Exclusion of Jews from the armed forces would deprive them of the greatest duty and the greatest right of the homeland, namely an education to toughness and readiness to put everything on the line for the fatherland. With Hindenburg’s death on August 2, 1934, however, Jewish veterans lost the one central figure in whom they had placed their faith. After the subsequent exclusion of Jews from the military, a number of protests were drafted. Repeated calls to allow Jewish youth into the army for them to perform the highest honorable duty (\textit{Ehrenpflicht}) and to have the honorable right (\textit{Ehrenrecht}) fell on deaf ears.\textsuperscript{68} More than one thousand former Jewish officers wrote in a note of protest to the Minister of War, Werner von Bloomberg, that their honor had been wounded, followed by a declaration of \textit{willingness} to nevertheless serve again in the future:

We do not want to push ourselves forward [\textit{aufdrängen}] for the active military service that we are not entitled to, but to express that we are not going to drop the claim for future Jewish participation in the honorable duty in arms and, thereby have the right for a dignified existence.\textsuperscript{69}

As this quote illustrates, there was an emphatic commitment to military masculinity, collectively performed and celebrated, amongst German Jews in the Third Reich. After the culmination of violence and aggression against German Jews during \textit{Kristallnacht} in 1938, however, most Jewish organizations and institutions were dissolved. The RjF was one of the very

\textsuperscript{67} Quoted in Caplan, “Wicked Sons,” 297.
\textsuperscript{68} Dunker, \textit{Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten}, 136, 140.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 180. Trans. S. Huebel.
last ones permitted to exist, but, it was no longer allowed to engage in active politics or in the education of youth; as its last function, it was restricted to the care of war casualties and the maintenance of Jewish cemeteries, even after deportations had begun in 1941.\(^7^0\) As a sign of resignation but perhaps also of defiance, the RjF proclaimed its intention to continue to cherish its soldierly ideals and beliefs by remaining in a state of defense without bearing arms (Wehrhaftigkeit ohne Waffen), and to protect the community, despite the weakening of the organization. It stated in 1938:

> With failure, an internal emigration now is recommended. The German Jew has to experience the restriction of military service (Wehrbeschränkung) imposed upon him as a soldierly test of character (charakterliche Wehrerprobung) in the deepest sense of soldiering: to act tightly (straff), faithful and trusting… What we have always wanted is now expected from us: willingness to sacrifice, bravery, decisiveness and readiness for responsibility… Integration and commitment for the community.\(^7^1\)

The once 50,000-member-strong and confident organization (out of a total German-Jewish population of 525,000 in 1933) was reduced to symbolic insignificance.\(^7^2\) Yet, the RjF constituted an important part of German-Jewish life in the Third Reich and the implicit efforts by Jewish men to hold on to their gender identities as military men.\(^7^3\) Its ideology cultivated a nationalist flavor and praised a manly and soldierly spirit, demonstrating bravery, courage, decisiveness and toughness of will, values to which all men in Nazi Germany were supposed to adhere. More than anything, the story of the RjF underscores how German Jews collectively – and initially quite successfully – negotiated with, protested against and resisted the new regime; it also provides insight into a gendered analysis of German Jews, both men and women, who used the gendered identities of Jewish males as self-understood patriotic military men, in the past and in the present.

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\(^7^0\) Grady, *The German Jewish Soldier of the First World War in History and Memory*, 148.

\(^7^1\) Dunker, *Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*, 182. Trans. S. Huebel.

\(^7^2\) This number includes members of the affiliated sports groups. See Caplan, “Wicked Sons,” 260.

\(^7^3\) Mosse, *Image of Man*, 139.
in order to maintain inclusion for themselves and their families and to resist their emasculation and marginalization. With the disappearance of a strong, centralized and collective voice in the late 1930’s, however, Jewish veterans and their families were increasingly left to themselves to make sense of and adapt to their new situations.

b) Jewish Individual Responses

Through identification with military social values, Jewish men and women hoped to eliminate barriers of religious, racial and ethnic difference that the Nazis were recreating. While a collective organization such as the RjF could have a decisive impact on Jewish everyday life, and could use its power in the public sphere – through its own press office, for instance, as well as in the political domain by negotiating privileged treatment for its members – processing the changes in their lives and making sense of the new order under Hitler was first and foremost an individual act that each and every German Jewish person had to go through. As part of negotiating and reconstructing their sense of belonging to the German state, culture and society, German Jewish men and women relied on individual strategies, some of which were intended to prove their loyalty to the fatherland through men’s past military contributions. As discussed above, military virtues and values had mattered to several generations of German Jews who had grown up in the Wilhelmine period, who had become accustomed to military values and who had experienced war itself. This tradition of values with its gendered ramifications did not simply represent a cultural residue that lingered on in the weekly beerhall gatherings of some veterans’ organizations. The military identity German Jewish men cultivated was principally – while also affirmed collectively – an individual attempt to assign gender identity. Jewish military masculinity, therefore, transcended efforts by the RjF to live up to the standards of the military. Military masculinity (like
gender in general) was part of people’s public and private lives, culturally expressed and physically embodied. Starting in 1933, it became an integral part of making sense of the Third Reich. According to the historian Judith Gerson,

[Referencing] service mattered because it was the instrument on which men and their families depended to secure their rights to citizenship and to bestow honor on them and their families. For these German citizens of Jewish faith, military service in World War I represented the pinnacle of acceptance as German men and German citizens – a definition of masculinity, which simultaneously linked national identity to gender identity.74

Two ways of alluding to military masculinity stand out. Firstly, German Jews made references to the military and military norms as part of a self-identification process. At a time of turmoil and uncertainty, many German Jews actively reminisced about their own military service and achievements as part of responding to and simultaneously defying Nazi threats and intimidations. By trying to preserve military masculinity as part of their identity, Jewish men constructed a self-image that helped them fend off, even deny, the divergent identity that the Nazi state imposed on them. Secondly, German Jews used military masculinity as way of affirming other men’s masculine identities. Honor, status and respect were often – as in the pre-Nazi years – assigned to individuals who had either served in the army or the war, or who had come to demonstrate and exhibit military virtues. As displayed in letters, diaries and memoirs, assigning military masculinity to themselves and others was one of the most common and visible response strategies German Jews utilized in the Third Reich.

Self-Identifications

In German society, it was considered normative for men to be the breadwinners and providers for their households (see Chapter 3). In Jewish families, particularly in the middle class, it was still uncommon for women to work, and if they did, it was rare that they did so outside the home or the family business. Female professionals, such as physicians and lawyers, still represented a small minority. The direct effects of Nazi intimidation and attack which in the early years of the Third Reich were still mostly contained to the public sphere – the workplaces, streets, and public institutions – were therefore felt first and foremost by Jewish men, who appeared more visibly in the public and who were first singled out and victimized. As Holocaust historians Dalia Ofer and Leonore Weitzman recognized, there was an initial focus on Jewish men for arrest and incarceration. It was much more likely for men to be beaten, arrested, imprisoned and executed by the Nazis.75 Marion Kaplan has similarly asserted that “the Nazis attacked Jewish men first, demolishing their careers and businesses… Men were far more vulnerable to physical assault and arrest.”76

Therefore, Jewish men developed strategies to respond to Nazi intimidation by utilizing symbolic language and gesture to perform military masculinity. Typically, such behaviors followed in the form of a direct reaction to a specific attempt by the Nazis to discriminate against Germany’s Jews. On April 1, 1933, the Nazis staged a nation-wide boycott as one of their first efforts to ostracize German Jews, intimidate them and hurt them economically. Placing paramilitary units, typically SA men, in front of stores and businesses, desecrating shop windows, intimidating passers-by and customers from entering into Jewish–owned stores, as well as verbally

and physically injuring Jewish store owners, were all part of the April boycott. The boycott was meant to be a defensive measure against anti-German propaganda from abroad, for which the Jews were held responsible.\textsuperscript{77} In response to the boycott, many Jewish businessmen decided to open their stores on April 1. In defiance and perhaps anticipation of some form of violent outbursts, many store owners “stood their ground” and displayed, only weeks after the Nazi seizure of power, some of the military attributes that German society had to come to internalize for decades: bravery, courage, steadfastness, and perseverance.

Many decided to “decorate” their stores with war memorabilia, displaying sabers, fences, knives and other personal war memorabilia in their store windows. Others wore the war medals that they had been awarded in World War I, including the Iron Cross and other honorary military badges. Edwin Landau (b.1890) of Deutsch-Krone, Western Prussia, vividly recalled the day of the boycott:

I took my war decorations, put them on, went into the street and visited Jewish shops where at first I was also stopped. But I was seething inside and most of all I

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., 21.
would have liked to shout my hatred into the faces of the barbarians... This land and this people that until now I had loved and treasured had suddenly become my enemy. So I was not a German anymore, or I was no longer supposed to be one. ...I approached... one guard whom I knew and who also knew me and I said to him, when you were still in your diapers, I was already fighting out there for this country.  

Born in 1925, Fritz Ottenheimer grew up in a family that owned a textile store in Constance. He remembered his father’s reaction on the day of the boycott:

My father went to our little store one morning... He saw trucks cruising through Constance... After my father had arrived at the store, he saw a uniformed SA guard in front of the door. My father turned around, went back home and returned ... with a little bag. This time he passed the Stormtrooper and unlocked the door. He took the shirts, socks and ties out of the shop window and spread out his World War I medals in their place. He then stepped outside, stood next to the Stormtrooper and pulled up his right shirt sleeve, exposing his war injury. He did not have to wait very long. A number of people who knew my father’s military record stepped up to the Stormtrooper and explained that Ludwig Ottenheimer was a good German, a disabled war veteran who had done more than just his duty for his country... More and more people arrived... 

The journalist Max Reiner (1883-1944) recalled how some Jewish store owners wrote in white letters on their shop windows the duration of their war service, the number of times they had been injured, and the decorations they had received. The businessman Erich Leyens (1898-2001) went so far as to print a pamphlet to be distributed on the day of the boycott:

I outlined the patriotic services of generations of my family to their country... I [also] had put on my old uniform with my war medals... [H]ere is what the local newspaper [the following day] wrote: “When people in uniform attempted to block the entrance to the commercial building of the firm Leyens and Levenbach, one of the owners, Erich Leyens, a frontline volunteer and recipient of the Iron Cross First Class, put on his field uniform and medals, placed himself next to the SA men and distributed the following leaflet: ‘Our Reich Chancellor Hitler, the Reich Ministers Frick and Goering have repeatedly made the following statement: Anyone who insults a combat veteran in the Third Reich will be punished with imprisonment. All three Leyens brothers served as volunteers on the front. They were wounded

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and were decorated for courageous action. Their father Hermann Leyens had been a volunteer in the fight against the Spartacists. His grandfather was wounded at Katzbach during the wars of liberation. With such a record of past national service, do we now have to be subjected to public humiliation? Is this how the fatherland today expresses its gratitude, by placing huge pickets in front of our door with the demand not to buy from our house? We regard this action which goes hand in hand with the dissemination of slanderous accusations all over town, as an attack on our national and civic honor as well as a desecration of the memory of 12,000 German front soldiers of the Jewish faith who have lost their lives in action. Furthermore, we regard this provocation as an affront against every decent citizen. We do not doubt that, even today, there are citizens in Wesel who have the courage of their convictions, which Bismarck once called for, and exemplify German integrity which, especially now, stands steadfastly by our side."

Such gestures of military masculinity were not exceptional in the early years of the Third Reich, nor were they limited to the boycott in April 1933. The Breslau teacher and historian Willy Cohn (1888-1941) confessed in his diary on May 1, 1933, one month following the boycott, that going to work was unsettling for him because he did not know if he might not be sent home again. So he stuck the ribbon of his Iron Cross through the buttonhole of his jacket: “Perhaps it is a good thing as a Jew to make a show of this right now.”

Even a few years after Hitler’s rise to power, Jewish men clung to their military identities which they thought corresponded to the masculine identities of mainstream Nazi society. In one of their many contradictory decisions, when the Nazi government decided in 1934 to introduce a further military decoration for World War I veterans, German Jewish veterans were not excluded. Cohn wrote in his diary: “Submitted to the police my application for the Front Fighters’ Cross!” A few months later, in February 1935, Cohn did not have to think twice about visiting a Nazi government building to pick up the piece of paper that he thought partially (re)-established him as a man: “Went to the police station to receive the Front

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83 Ibid., 43.
1. German Jews and Military Masculinity

Fighters’ Cross… the Police Chief gave a short speech in which he pointed out that wearing the Cross is an honor.”84 The merchant Alfred Schwerin (b. 1892) recalled that in the 1930s he too always wore his military badge because “all men are wearing some kind of badge.”85 The emblems served as markers for German-Jewish men, and through references to military service these men made themselves appear to conform to the general standard of identifying with the military, a process all German (men) had to partake of. Even the rabbi of Hannover, Emil Schorsch (1899-1982), deemed it important enough in his memoir to remember the same recognition he received by Hitler in 1935.86 And the seventy-year old Albert Herzfeld (1865-1942) felt the urge in late November 1935 to list in his diary all the medals and recognitions he had received from the German Kaisers Wilhelm I, Friedrich III and Wilhelm II.87

Jewish men widely practiced making explicit reference to their military service, either in the public sphere through symbolic gestures like putting on their uniforms and medals, or in the more private sphere through the act of writing in a diary. Clearly, German Jewish men constructed a mental map consisting of what they considered as their previously established military honor, national citizenship and gender identity, and the current crisis that threatened to deprive Jewish men of their intersecting identities. Because German Jews – represented by men – had participated in the war, had made significant sacrifices, had proven their loyalty to the fatherland, and had demonstrated courage and bravery as attested by war medal rewards, they anticipated in the early years of Hitler’s reign that German society at large would (continue to) honor these deeds and achievements and, as a result, would respect them and their families as equal, fellow citizens.

84 Ibid., 58.
85 Alfred Schwerin, Memoirs, LBINY, ME593 MM69, 125.
86 Emil Schorsch, Memoirs, LBINY, ME575 MM67, 2.
It is striking that this paradigm of similar reactions, though they took place all over the country and included Jewish men of all ages, of different class backgrounds and of different levels of religious observance, occurred spontaneously. There was no planning, no cooperation or coordination among German Jews on April 1. Public displays of military masculinity were not prescribed by an institution like the RjF. Reactions were typically single acts by individuals, which in their totality, however, constituted a pattern of gendered behavior. Upholding military norms and referring to military achievements rendered German Jewish men and their families – in their own view – as honorable and respected citizens.

While these cases exemplify specific intent with a desired outcome, and some did indeed generate positive results, Jewish men also made assertions of military masculinity – at the time and in retrospect – in more general contexts. Many still thought that as soldiers themselves they knew what it meant to face and endure danger. Through evoking military virtues such as perseverance, discipline and stoicism, many Jewish men perceived the Third Reich as a storm to be weathered, a temporary predicament – similar to a war – which they would have to endure. The lumber merchant of Königsberg Arthur Propp (1890-1965) recalled that “perhaps one could have seen the danger clearer if there had not been four years of war… One was used to the immoral life. War and inflation had passed.” The neurologist Hermann Pineas (b. 1892), in his 1945 memoir, recalled that in 1933, as a wounded war veteran, he thought nothing could happen to him. Clearly, German Jews’ behavior, attitudes, and judgments, were shaped by, among other factors, their or their relatives’ identities as military men. Because Jewish men, as cemented in their memory, had endured and persevered in times of crisis, with their lives at stake, many thought they had the

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89 Hermann Pineas, Memoirs, LBINY, ME502 MM4 MM61, 1.
prerequisites necessary to endure another “storm,” while others presumed that as deserving veterans, the Nazis would not subject them to antisemitic laws.

The self-identifications with military masculinity and the concurrent attempts at normalization, however, did not simply frame Jewish men’s responses to Nazi intimidation with symbolic gestures that could lead to positive outcomes; self-identifications were also expressed in situations of frustration and despair. Juxtaposing past times when military service was performed and masculine honor and respect were gained to the present time with the military value system disintegrating for Jews, Jewish men and women voiced their disillusionment and incomprehension. In almost nostalgic passages, authors such as the language professor Victor Klemperer (1881-1960) portrayed World War I as a time of risking one’s life, but also one of camaraderie and respect:

I compare this dread of death with that in the field. This here is a 1000 times more horrible. There it was at worst the field of honor, there I was certain of every assistance were I to be wounded… It is a thousand, a thousand times more horrible than all my fear in 1915.90

The professor of Romance languages further noted: “I often tell myself that I was also in mortal danger in 1915. But here death threatens me in a more awful form.” On August 1, 1942, he wrote: “Tomorrow, outbreak of war in 1914… what a decent business the last war was, how little it horrified me in comparison to this one.” In October 30, 1942, he asserted: “It is unimaginably dreadful, not to be compared with any memory of Flanders, or any mortal fear I have ever experienced.”91 The elderly Albert Herzfeld also expressed his frustrations relating to a perceived loss of identity as a German Jewish man. In November 1938, he grumbled that “I have defended

91 Ibid., 64, 114, 161.
my fatherland as a volunteer in the war, have endured all, but now I am not allowed to cast my vote. I cannot understand this!”\textsuperscript{92} Klemperer’s and Herzfeld’s statements exemplify the connection between rights of citizenship, military service and the construction of masculinity. As a man who had served for years in war and peacetime, Herzfeld considered himself an honorable German – a citizen-soldier of the type that had originated in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century – who had fulfilled his duty and who deserved the full rights of any German citizen, including the right to vote.\textsuperscript{93} A similar diary entry of disillusionment from Dr. Max Cohnreich (1882-1949) read: “German Jews have not only offered their skill and knowledge but sacrificed their wealth and lives to the Fatherland and the Fatherland’s thankfulness drove them after unspeakable cruelties, crimes, pain and torment fifteen years later into the wilderness!”\textsuperscript{94}

Even years after the events, some authors juxtaposed their war services to the inconceivably perceived injustice that they had experienced under Hitler. Edwin Halle of Saarbrücken (1895-1967) complained in an appendage to his diary that after serving the fatherland he was “kicked in the butt,” even though he too had received the honorary certificate from Hitler; only luck, he explained, saved him from the gas chambers, a fate even the bravest of his comrades who had been decorated with the highest honors faced as a reward for their services.\textsuperscript{95} Joseph Adler (b. 1895) recalled in his memoirs that in the immediate aftermath of \textit{Kristallnacht}, after his home had been destroyed by rioters,

\begin{quote}
during my military stint in France, I saw much devastation. Houses and apartments that were destroyed by shell fire, burning, charred and scattered property, but such a picture of barbaric annihilation, I have never seen.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{93} What Herzfeld, of course, ignores here is that Germany by 1938 had long ceased to be a democracy; parliamentary elections were no longer held.
\textsuperscript{94} Max Cohnreich, \textit{Diary}, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, AC 2006.151, March 30, 1939.
\textsuperscript{96} Joseph Adler, \textit{The family of Joseph and Marie Adler. Jews in Germany, German Jews in America}, LBINY, ME971 MMII21,76.
German-Jewish men were products of their times, of the world they had grown up in. As a way of comprehending the violence they and their families were experiencing, many responded by making reference to military norms, norms that had previously guided their lives, provided orientation, and generated rewards in the forms of reciprocated honor and status in society. This previously established frame of reference was used as a safety net, as a last means, by Jewish men and women to reverse unjust treatment and reinstall the previous status quo that had guaranteed (at least some) respect and sense of equality. If openly upholding military values no longer helped, then nothing else would. In their growing desperation and state of incomprehension, German Jews made extra use of men’s military identities. Juxtaposing the norms from a time when these norms had acquired social and cultural meaning to the current (or subsequently remembered) time of Nazi dictatorship allowed Jews, and men in particular, to express their protest and indignation. Trying to justify their gendered identities as military men or men who adhered to military norms, Jewish men used diaries and memoirs to express their profound frustration over being ostracized from German society and its commonly shared values, and the vague, implicit hope to re-enter it.

*Identification of Others*

In addition to referencing one’s own military service, military masculinity was constructed relationally by being assigned to others. Many sources describe how individual German Jewish men personally reacted to Nazi discrimination by recalling their personal military history, while other memoirs and family accounts describe a family member (father, brother, son, husband, in-law) or close friend who also was a war veteran. Typically, such references are made in the context of describing the perceived unjust treatment of these individuals. Similar to self-identifications, references to others’ military masculinity juxtaposed the victimization of the individual to his
actual military merits and military identity. The referencing of military service and values was meant to return deserved honor and respect to the individual, a symbolic countermeasure to the attempted emasculation of Jewish men.

In his meticulously recorded diary entries, Victor Klemperer, who was an outgoing, well-known intellectual in Dresden, frequently described his personal encounters with others. Klemperer, who was a veteran but who as an intellectual had not associated with the military, sports, or even political organizations that celebrated military virtues, still habitually described the men he met based on the standards of military accomplishments. He labeled a Jewish physician in Dresden, Dr. Katz, as someone who kept a World War I photo of himself in uniform, on horseback, wearing a monocle and the Iron Cross, First Class in his waiting room. On another occasion, he noted: “Yesterday at Marckwald’s. There we met Bernstein, a scraggy man, in his 50s, corn merchant, ended up as a medical orderly in the war, now male nurse.” Describing his female co-worker in the factory, he wrote: “My Frau Rudolph is a harmless creature. Her father fell in August 1914.” In the cellar during an air raid on Dresden, Klemperer met a Mr. Kautzsch, “an upright warden, … former sergeant major (silver wounded-in-action medal, long decorations bar).”

While Klemperer’s detailed descriptions related to people he hardly knew, in most memoirs and diaries, Jewish men and women made primary reference to family members who, endowed with military masculinity, were depicted in a more respectful, honorable fashion than individuals who were not associated with things military. Already on the first page of his memoir, Ernst Hausmann (b. 1929) explained:

We did not leave Germany because we were unpatriotic citizens. During World War, I my father had served four years at the front in the trenches around Verdun, France and received the Iron Cross in recognition of his service to his country.\(^98\)


\(^98\) Ernst Hausmann, *A family during troubled times. The Hausmanns and the Weingartners, 1934-1944*, LBINY, ME886 MMII12, 1.
Walter Besser (b. 1911) of Coburg remembered how honored his father, a World War I veteran, felt when he was awarded an honorary military badge (Frontkämpferabzeichen) in 1935. The family chronicle of Hans Wolfes (b. 1876), commissioned in 1936, read: “As in previous wars, the Wolfes family placed their sons at the disposal (zur Verfügung gestellt) of the defense of the fatherland during the World War of 1914-1918.” The chronicle then lists all family members who had died on the “field of honor.” Harvey Newton (born as Hermann Neustadt in 1920 in Breslau) started his 1995 memoir with his birthdate and birthplace, followed by, still on page one, his father’s military voluntary service in 1901. Fritz Ottenheimer, born in 1925, began his history, also written in 1995, with his male relatives who had participated in World War I, and the recent memoir by Zvi Aviram’s (born in 1927 as Heinz Abrahamson) states:

At the beginning of my memoirs, I would like to place the story of my father Arthur Abrahamson, who was a soldier in World War I. It is important for me to begin my memories this way … After my father had committed himself to war and Kaiser for many years, as a sign of gratitude he received a kick in the butt (Tritt in den Hintern).

Larry (Lothar) Orbach (1924-2008) recalled in his memoirs how his father in the early 1930s was the proud president of the local chapter of the RjF in Falkenburg and recorded that his father would never leave the house without his military badge. Once, his father even got involved in a pub fight in response to some antisemitic jokes. Larry remembered how proud he was to tell his mother about his father’s “heroic deed” (heroischer Kraftakt). All these cases demonstrate how family

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101 Harvey Newton, Erinnerungen an das KZ Buchenwald Nov.-Dez. 1938, LBINY MMII22, 1.
102 Ottenheimer, Memoir, 1.
members, such as sons, were so poignantly affected by their father’s behaviors, their enactment of military masculinity, that decades later they would still remember these episodes in their memoirs. Clearly, the self-identification of Jewish men as war veterans and adherence to a military code of behavior in civilian life was echoed by others including the friends and families of veterans and soldiers. These writers transported their fathers’ military masculinity into their memoirs and thereby re-affirmed their fathers’ gendered identity in the eyes of their sons or acquaintances. They projected other men’s military service into texts that helped consolidate those men’s identities as German Jewish men.

Importantly, this reciprocal process of re-affirming each other’s gendered identity through military service was not only limited to men. Various primary sources indicate that military masculinity – as a constituent element of masculinity – was not only performed and demonstrated by men, but also by women. Masculinity studies do not inevitably have to focus on men.\(^\text{105}\) The cultural constructions of gender are in a constant process of re-affirmation and negotiation, and the cultural definitions of what it means to be a man (or woman) get internalized and reproduced by both men and women. Thus, Jewish women, too, used the military as a gendered reference point as a way of defining masculinity. While a few referred to themselves in masculine, military terms, such as Herta Nathorff, who called herself in her diary “a soldier in battle,”\(^\text{106}\) much more common was women’s practice to assign Jewish men a degree of military masculinity. Marga Spiegel (1912-2014) remembered that during the Nazi years her family thought that due to her father’s and grandfather’s military service in World War I the family would not be harassed.\(^\text{107}\) In her memoirs,

\(^{105}\) Jürgen Martschukat & Olaf Stieglitz, Geschichte der Männlichkeiten (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2008), 57 & 75.
\(^{106}\) Nathorff, Das Tagebuch der Hertha Nathorff, 98.
Elizabeth Freund (1898-1992) introduced her brother-in-law as a World War I officer decorated with the Iron Cross.\footnote{Elizabeth Freund, \textit{Memoirs}, LBINY, ME153 MM24, 49.} And Frieda Friedmann wrote the following letter, addressed to President von Hindenburg:

> I was engaged to be married in 1914. My fiancé was killed in frontline combat in 1914. Two of my brothers, Max and Julius Cohn, were killed in frontline combat in 1916 and 1918, respectively. My remaining brother, Willy, came back from the field, blinded in a hail of shrapnel... In 1920, I married a disabled soldier with whom I live in a very unhappy union because of his handicap... All were decorated with the Iron Cross for service to the Fatherland. And now it has come about in our Fatherland that pamphlets are being circulated in the streets, demanding \textit{Juden raus}. There are public incitements to pogroms and acts of violence against Jews. We are Jews and did our unreserved duty for the Fatherland. Should it not be possible for your Excellency to bring some relief and to remember what the Jews, too, did for the Fatherland? Are these incitements against Jews courage or cowardice when the Jews constitute 1 percent of the 60 million inhabitants in the German state?\footnote{Quoted in Leyens & Andor, \textit{Years of Estrangement}, 25. Friedmann’s letter gained some popularity as Hindenburg personally responded by looking into the matter and forwarded the letter to Hitler who categorically disputed antisemitic pogroms. See also http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4952459,00.html, Retrieved April 24, 2017.}

In writing letters or remembering male relatives’ contributions, Jewish women perpetuated the social norm of male honor through military achievement. The purpose of mentioning their relatives’ military past was to retroactively assign to them the respect and acknowledgment that they deserved and thereby define them as reputable men in a situation of powerlessness and victimization. While some references were brief and limited to World War I, other women went into more detail, solidifying their men’s military identity. Charlotte Hamburger recalled how in the 1920s her husband, the judge Hans Hamburger (1891-1953), belonged to a fraternity where he was able to create a sense of belonging, practice subordination (\textit{unterordnen}) to the will of the group, and developed a martial spirit through fencing, all helping him to live a manly life (\textit{betonte Männlichkeit}).\footnote{Charlotte Hamburger, \textit{Die Familie und das Leben von Hans Hamburger, 1891-1953}, LBINY, ME253 MM31, 12.} Statements like these demonstrate that military masculinity was equally
internalized, accepted and reproduced by some Jewish women who came to see an honorable man as someone who had succeeded in life. To these women, the men to whom they referred were manlier as they had already proven their manhood in the past.

Aside from discursively constructing military masculinity through their writing, women’s attempts to validate men as warrior-like figures could translate into tangible results. Marion Kaplan succinctly illustrated how in the aftermath of Kristallnacht, in late 1938 and early 1939, Jewish women persistently negotiated on their husbands’ behalf to secure their release from concentration camps (and subsequently from Germany). Some of these women utilized a gendered strategy of assigning their Jewish husbands, relatives or friends a status of military masculinity, hoping it would ensure and expedite the men’s discharge from imprisonment.\footnote{Kristallnacht was a pogrom against German Jews throughout Nazi Germany between November 9 and 10, 1938. Jewish synagogues and other buildings were put on fire and destroyed; Jewish businesses and private home were broken into with property damages and possessions stolen. Additionally, more than 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and put into the concentration camps Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen. For more info, see Alan Steinweis, Kristallnacht (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).} Charlotte Stein-Pick entered the Nazi Party Headquarters in Munich, the notorious Brown House, on numerous occasions in 1939 to request her husband’s freedom based on his status as a war veteran. Her actions implied that her husband, the patriotic German, had endured sufficient sacrifices during the war for his country and was therefore entitled to privileged treatment. Her action further suggested that her husband was more of a man than others who had not participated in the war and who thus should not be among the first to be released. More than anything, Stein’s behavior exemplifies the fluid state of gender construction. Masculinity was not a monolithic, one-dimensional form of ideal manhood. A plurality of masculinities existed; military masculinity, by definition, differentiated itself from women but it also differed from other types of masculinity, the unsoldierly ones, for instance. In a sense, Stein implicitly validated the Nazi discourse of the
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effeminate man by the insinuation that the imprisoned Jewish men who had not participated in the war were less manly. This differentiation among groups of men (the military men vs. the non-military men) is central to conceptualizing masculinity as a cultural construct that consists of multiple types that each contend for a dominant status. As military masculinity had become hegemonic in the late 19th century and was even more elevated in the Third Reich, military masculinity was not only produced by the state and its organizations and institutions, but by society as well. The militarization of society was a gender-producing process in which women and men equally participated.

**Conclusion**

The German military was of major importance to many Jewish families and individuals in the Third Reich. Some Jews and half-Jews (*Mischlinge*), as Bryan Rigg has shown, were even able to enter the Wehrmacht in the 1930s and hide their Jewish identities; a few thought it was so honorable to serve in the German army that they blatantly ignored the rampant antisemitism that was apparent in Germany.112 While the cases of Jewish Wehrmacht soldiers may have been rare and exceptional, they still illuminate the military as an institution of social importance and the pervasiveness of military values within German society. Jewish men continued to be part of this trend of militarization in society with many coming to accept the Nazi policies of a nationalist foreign policy, the rebuilding of a strong army and the promise of avenging the supposed injustice which happened in Versailles in 1919. As war veterans and German nationals, many German

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112 For instance, Horst Geitner was born in 1922 to a Jewish father and raised Jewish. To protect himself from possible antisemitic attacks, however, he was baptized in 1933. He volunteered for the Luftwaffe and received the Iron Cross, an accomplishment that made him proud. “I had proven that I was brave and earned my equality.” Geitner felt that the authorities would now see that he was a worthy German and not view him as half-Jewish or as a second-class soldier anymore. “I would be lying to you if I told you I didn’t like being a soldier. It was an honor to serve.” Bryan Mark Rigg, *Lives of Hitler’s Jewish Soldiers: Untold Tales of Men of Jewish Descent who Fought for the Third Reich*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 247.
Jewish men and women identified themselves through men’s military service and an adherence to military norms as equal members of society. As is shown in this chapter, the belief in such values had developed prior to 1933 but its importance increased after the Nazis’ rise to power and continued even when German Jews had been deported to the East. It was institutionally-collectively infested in a political context, bodily performed in the public and private sphere as a response to the antisemitic discourses which had developed in the (late) 19th century and that saw Jews as unfit for the military. Men and women had come to internalize the military value system and the gender construction of men as military-like men and withdrew tangible benefits from it, such as the prolonged employment of Jewish war veterans.

The story of Jewish military masculinity as part of gender identity construction and negotiation was never a static one, and it is discernable that Jewish men’s demonstrations of military masculinity were age-specific and especially resonated among members of the war generation, the men and women who had previously internalized Wilhemine militarism and experienced a war. Moreover, adhering to a military value system was performative and occurred in a larger social-cultural context that celebrated Germany’s return to political and military strength and that swayed many German-Jewish men to participate in this wave of excitement. Thus, military masculinity gained performative meaning especially in the first half of the Third Reich, when German Jews still had hopes for a continued existence in Germany and were confident enough to fight for their rights. Over time, however, with the continued economic, social and

113 For instance, Anna Hájková shows that Jewish men in Theresienstadt talked all day about their World War I memories See Anna Hájková, “Mutmaßungen über deutsche Juden: Alte Menschen aus Deutschland im Theresienstädtter Ghetto,” in Alltag im Holocaust: Jüdisches Leben im Großdeutschen Reich 1941-1945, eds. Andrea Löw, Doris Bergen & Anna Hájková (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014). Though this cannot be corroborated, two of the sources I studied even claimed that the RjF was, as late as 1942, able to prevent their deportations to Auschwitz and successful intervention for transfers to Theresienstadt instead. See Richard Ehrlich, Tagebuch The History of our Negative Emigration, 1943-1945 LBINY ME1101 MM II31 and Edmund Hadra, “Papers,” LBINY AR1249.  
114 Cohn, No Justice in Germany: The Breslau Diaries, 1933-1941, 275.
cultural deprivations that German Jews faced, incentives to hold on to the understandings of military masculinity declined in frequency and importance. Demonstrations such as the ones on April 1, 1933 and subsequent calls for Jewish integration into the new army, for instance, ceased after 1938. The lawyer and politician Franz Memelsdorff (1889-1958) remembered that following *Kristallnacht* and his release from the concentration camp, he stopped wearing the Iron Cross medal. Such symptomatic gestures reveal that the aspiration to remain equal members of Hitler’s *Volksgemeinschaft* dissipated when the Nazis made it apparent that no Jewish existence was possible in Germany.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, however, even then there was a spiritual continuity of Jewish military masculinity as part of Jewish men’s identity. During an air raid on Dresden in June 1944, when truly one should have feared for one’s life, Victor Klemperer described a little band of people in the Jewish air raid cellar, very few men among them:

> Cohn, Eisemann senior, Neumark chat to one another. Naturally about their war experiences 1914-1918. A grotesque conversation really in a Jew’s cellar. But it goes without saying that each one of us is attached to the German army of the First World War … with the same degree of passion.

Klemperer called it “the Jews’ favorite topic.” What he meant was the Jewish *men’s* favorite topic.

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Antisemitism already had a long and established tradition in Germany and most of Europe when the Nazis assumed power in 1933. It had evolved over time from a religious-based ideology to one based on modern, pseudo-scientific and racial discourses of Jewish “otherness” in the second half of the 19th century. To stigmatize, ostracize and discriminate against Jews, the National Socialists invested considerable energy in canonizing some of the established textual and figurative variations of antisemitism. Using mass media, the Nazis hoped to increase awareness of Jewish “otherness” and activate a sense of fear within German society. By creating the image of an out-group, the Nazi propagandists used various means to reach their goal. This chapter

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1 An abridged version of this chapter was presented at the Max & Hilde Kochmann Summer School at the University of Sussex, July 2-5, 2017. I am grateful to all participants and their feedback.
examines one such antisemitic discourse: Jewish racial defilement and the effects it had on Jewish masculine identity. I will demonstrate that the Nazis misused the Jewish male body and allegedly criminal mind to convince German society of a Jewish sexual-racial threat, while German Jews, on the other hand, internalized and processed such inscriptions with some Jewish men even modifying their social demeanors. A conspicuous allegation in Nazi propaganda, a recurrent indictment in German courts and an agonizing, personal experience of criminalization that many Jewish men faced, the theme of Jewish racial defilement was one of the most visible motifs in the media and an essential element of antisemitism in the Third Reich.

The first section serves as an introduction providing historical context to the 19th-century rise of antisemitic sexualized images of the Jew, emanating from medical science and racial anthropology; the second part examines Nazi imagery of Jewish men and their functions; the third section, analyzes how racial-sexual antisemitism was codified in legal practice in the Third Reich, and the fourth part examines Jewish perceptions, internalizations and negotiations of Rassenschande.

1. Origins and Context: Antisemitism, Race and Jewish Sexuality

European cultural constructions of normative manhood – measured by men’s stronger muscle strength and willpower – classified men as the stronger sex, more active and with a potential of aggression. Long before the Nazis came to power, the militaristic society of fin-de-siècle Germany had defined masculinity in soldierly terms. After 1918, former freikorps members

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2 Images of female weakness, defenselessness and passivity had obviously originated long before the rise of the Nazi party and were not necessarily tied to antisemitism. The picture of the passive, helpless woman, however, was enhanced and aggressively perpetuated by racist, völkisch authors prior to and during the Third Reich and became part of a canon of the state-promoted gender identities. Two notable bestselling examples include Artur Dinter’s Die Sünde wider das Blut (1917) and Guido Kreutzer’s Die Schwarze Schmach: Der Roman des geschändeten Deutschlands (1921), with a repulsive depiction of a victimized woman on the cover page.
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and politically conservative, völkisch associations, as Klaus Theweleit has shown, continued in their belief in a German-soldierly masculinity that was defined by physical male prowess and aggression and the subordination of women.³ Delineating his utopian state, Hitler wrote in Mein Kampf:

[M]y beautiful youth! Is there a more beautiful generation in the entire world? Look at these young men and boys! What material! It will be the foundation of a new world order. My education system will be hard. The weak must be hammered away. In my castle a generation of young men will grow up who will be the terror of the world. I want forceful young men majestic, awesome, and fearless, able to withstand pain, without weakness or gentleness. The free wild beast should stare from their eyes. I want my young men to be strong and beautiful. They should have a physical preparation in all sports. I want them to be athletic… This way I have the pure material of nature in front of me.⁴

Hitler’s idealization of a strong, physical masculinity was not limited to extremist groups like the Nazis but echoed the scientific dogma of the time that intertwined questions of proper sexuality with ones of racial, national health. In 1928, one of the most widely read racial anthropologists and later decorated professor, Hans F. K. Günther, classified “Aryan” manhood in his Kleine Rassenkunde des Deutschen Volkes:

The Nordic “Aryan” race is tall, long-legged, and slender, with an average height of the male of 1.74m. The extremities are strong but slender, as are his neck, feet, and hands…. Typical for the Nordic head is the strong back of the skull that reaches far back… The man looks courageous… The skin is white or pink and lets the blood vessels look through … like milk and blood… The hair is straight, in childhood often curly, soft and thin. The color of the hair is blond, often a golden blond, the children mostly white blond… The eyes are blue, blue-grey or grey. They are shining…The Nordic man can best be characterized by his superb willpower, his powers of judgment, his cool realism, his trustfulness on man-to-man basis, his chivalry and justice.⁵

³ Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies, Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History (Minnesota: University of Minneapolis, 1987).
It was in this context, the constructed idealization of a bodily-soldierly masculinity as the epitome of racial health, that the image of the Jewish male as the personified sickly man emerged. To exclude Jews from public, male-exclusive institutions such as the military or the political realm, since the 19th century antisemitic imagery had predominantly utilized male characters, stigmatizing them as unmanly, particularly due to his military inaptitude (Chapter 1). While Jewish women did appear in some images, they were not the norm, and as Andrea Haibl has shown, they had entirely disappeared by 1933. The images of Jews were based on a cultural tradition of vilifying men first and foremost, while women, especially in traditionalist views, were regarded as passive, unpolitical and non-military subjects.

Other common 19th-century antisemitic stereotypes described and depicted Jews as the untrustworthy, extorting peddler (Wucherer), dressed in shaggy rags; later on as the obese banker, dressed in expensive suits; as the fully-bearded Ostjude, caricatured in a religious kaftan dress, hat and long black payot (sidelocks), frequently exposed as a homeless, filthy-looking wanderer (Wanderer); and the seemingly assimilated urban intellectual, typically a journalist with horn-rimmed glasses or a physician in a doctor’s coat. Yet, it was the Jewish male race defiler that would come to prominence in the Third Reich and it was the sexualized imagery of Nazi propaganda that tangibly resonated in many Jewish and non-Jewish diaries and memoirs.

The sexualized form of antisemitism originated when modern science superseded the influence of religion, and an ideology of racism became more central in the second half of the 19th century. According to Social Darwinist and eugenic schools of thought, the world consisted of

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different human races that competed for the space and resources necessary for their survival. For groups of the political right, members of ultra-nationalist, chauvinist, völkisch associations with dreams of German (imperial) dominance in the world, the question of Jewish “otherness” turned out to be less a matter of religious and cultural difference than of racial distinction and medical importance because Jews consisted of a people with an inherently different and irreversibly inferior genetic makeup. Writers such as Arthur de Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Alfred Rosenberg and others argued that Jews consisted of an idiosyncratically inferior and diseased body. As Sander Gilman has demonstrated, depicting Jews in distinctively ugly bodies was meant to assign them sickliness.

To make 19th-century antisemitic racism more comprehensible and popular, images and caricatures in particular were used, making the Jewish body visible. Such images relied on physiognomic features of the Jewish male, such as abnormally large hands, lips and noses, black curly hair and crooked posture, and depicted the Jewish body in unhygienic, dirty ways. Using artistic techniques for making the Jew recognizable was, thus, an imperative as antisemites had to circumvent the fact that most German Jews had long assimilated in dress, speech, and lifestyle to German society. References to alleged Jewish physiognomic features and the face in particular –

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8 Sander Gilman, ““Die Rasse ist nicht schön” – “Nein wir Juden sind keine hübsche Rasse.” Der schöne und der hässliche Jude,” in *Der schejne Jid: Das Bild des Jüdischen Körpers in Mythos und Ritual*, eds. Sander Gilman & Robert Jütte (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1998), 58. For instance, one medical discourse purpoted that Jewish men were exposed to and became life-long carriers of contagious diseases like syphilis, for instance when Jewish men were circumcized. See Klaus Hödl, *Die Pathologisierung des jüdischen Körpers* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1997), 88.
9 The Nazis’ obsession with hygiene and national health had its roots in the late 19th century with the institutionalization of the medical profession. Ideas of uncleanness as signs of otherness, disease and inferiority were promptly assigned to marginalized groups, including Jews. Antisemitic jokes of Jews visiting German spa towns such as Marienbad and Karlsbad were popular as they emphasized how dirty the bodies of Jews were and how unsuccessfully they tried to cleanse themselves of their Jewishness. The Nazis would later draw on such discourses of hygiene and connect them to racialist thinking. See Rachel Dipper, “Einmal muss der Mensch ins Bad. Grüße aus Karlsbad und Marienbad,” in *Abgestempelt: Judenfeindliche Postkarten*, ed. Georg Heuberger (Heidelberg: Umschau Verlag, 1999).
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the distorted large noses, black curly hair, flabby lips – demonstrated a degree of desperation on behalf of the Nazis to make visible an alleged enemy.\(^{10}\) Theodor Fritsch in his slanderous work *Handbuch der Judenfrage* noted already in 1907 that Jews were no longer easily recognizable:

They are not seldom blond and reddish, with water-blue eyes and flat noses, and when they take off the caftan and cut off their side-locks, only a perceptive observer can recognize them as Jews. Often, it is only the expressions of their eyes that reveal the Jew.\(^{11}\)

The Jews’ disordered outward appearance signaled, however, not only an inferiority in bodies and thus an unsuitability for joining the military, but also a different and inferior Jewish mindset. Jews were regarded as un-German, alien to German culture and traditions. In a highly polarized gendered context, Jewish men were questioned as to masculine virtues such as courage or hardness, as analyzed in Chapter 1. Jews (and others), thus, were not only assigned a racially different body type, but perhaps more importantly, their characters and behaviours were also defined through race.

Combining scientific and racist sexism, notions of protecting the German nation by way of prohibiting sexual relations and preserving the racial purity of the nation satisfied not only medical experts and eugenicists, but antisemites alike. To justify the need for protecting Germany from within, an image of an internal threat was thus needed. Jewish ineptitude, such as in the military, no longer sufficed. By 1900 Jews were increasingly portrayed as unbalanced and entirely controlled by their *eros*, their sexual lust.\(^ {12}\) Using the new medical interest in and knowledge of sexual matters, antisemitic writers classified Jews as sexually lecherous and driven by animalistic instincts. Theodor Fritsch (1852-1933) in his 1897 *Antisemitismus Katechismus* defined the

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restriction of sexual intercourse with Jews as the most imperative of the “Ten German Commandments.”\(^\text{13}\) By the time the Nazis came to power, a discursive seedbed of racial antisemitism, intertwined with notions of Jewish sexuality, had been planted.

2. Nazi Propaganda and the Discourse of Jewish Sexuality

Trying to unveil and make “the Jew” visible, in order to persuade German society of a Jewish threat, antisemites before and after 1933 turned to discursive strategies that linked invented physical and mental features to visual representations of the Jew. Though there is an important and substantial corpus of literature on Nazi propaganda as well as specific studies on racial defilement in the Third Reich, one of the most striking features in Nazi propaganda imagery – the unanimous depiction of the male Jew as the villain – has gone largely unnoticed by scholars.\(^\text{14}\)


\(^\text{14}\) A considerable number of studies on Nazi propaganda either focus on the plethora of print material and propaganda films that broadcast a utopian Nazi state with healthy Aryans (Daniel Wildmann), or on the vilification of Germany’s war enemies during World War II (Jeffrey Herf). Studies that concentrate on antisemitic propaganda, not to be confused with antisemitic ideology or legislation, are much rarer and often focus on key individuals such as Hitler, Kurt Rosenberg and Julius Streicher (see works by Randall Bytwerk, Wolfram Meyer zu Utrup and Franco Ruault) or specific print magazines or motion pictures such as Wolfgang Benz’s study on the motion picture Jud Süß. If sexual antisemitism has been part of scholarly analyses, the focus has lain on political and institutional histories, such as investigations of the justice system in Nazi Germany or the prosecution of cases of racial defilements in court. These studies, however, do not incorporate examinations of propaganda. Finally, there are still studies that outright ignore the importance of male Jewish sexuality (and therefore the interplay of gender in Nazi discourses) in the context of Nazi racial propaganda and legislation (e.g., Beverly Chalmers’ recent “Jewish Women’s Sexual Behavior and Sexualized Abuse during the Nazi era”). Synthetic studies that link Nazi propaganda, antisemitism and Jewish gender are still largely absent.
To legitimize their racism, Nazi propagandists scandalized Jewish male sexuality, creating a metaphor of Jewish sexual threat and racial destruction of the “Aryan” nation, commonly referred to as racial defilement. To visualize the invisible processes of racial degeneration and defilement, the Nazis came to rely on the effective use of imagery that annotated such processes by depicting exclusively Jewish men in a hyper-masculinized, aggressive state.\(^\text{15}\)

The Nazis defined “racial defilement,” Rassenschande, as the purported and pernicious crime by Jewish male “predators” who defiled the German race by lusting after blonde women, having sexual intercourse with them and thereby mixing their inferior and putatively diseased Jewish blood with that of “Aryans.”\(^\text{16}\) As the Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question (Institut zum Studium der Judenfrage) claimed in 1939, there could be no doubt that Jews had a distinctively sensual lust of sexual nature in their blood.\(^\text{17}\) In discourses on racial defilement, the metaphor of blood had become particularly important as blood was viewed as an allegory for commonality and solidarity among Germans.\(^\text{18}\) The Nazi fetish of maintaining the purity of

\(^{15}\) George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1997), 140.

\(^{16}\) Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 70.

\(^{17}\) Institut zum Studium der Judenfrage, *Die Juden in Deutschland*, 8th ed. (Munich: Franz Eher Verlag, 1939), 369.

“Aryan” blood by avoiding any physical contact with Jews and other out-groups metaphorically translated into strengthening a sense of community and unity within the in-group that was based on a common genealogy, culture and history. The message in Nazi propaganda depictions of Jewish racial defilement, thus, was that a strong people like the Germans could only stick together, be strong and survive, if the people heeded the principle of protecting the most essential and basic element of their organism, their blood.

To educate German society about the Jewish sexual threat, the Nazis used a plethora of print materials. No other print magazine could rival Julius Streicher’s *Der Stürmer* in its fervor to disseminate notions of Jewish racial defilement. Since its inception in 1925, the Nuremberg-based paper sought to spread antisemitic messages and incitement by using grossly exaggerated stereotypes of the “evil Jew.” With persistent regularity, its caricatures indicated how centrally important racial defilement had become in the Nazi mind. The caricatures suggested a pervasiveness of racial defilement by Jews who did not single out specific women but targeted all German women. According to the Nazi author Kurt Plischke, author of the pseudo-scientific monograph *Rassenschande*, the list of tricks Jewish men used to defile women was extensive. Luring women into their luxurious cars, for instance, the Jew was portrayed as a lecherous seducer going after innocent, beautiful women whose bodies they savagely raped and afterwards “discarded (wegwerfen) like a squeezed citron,” leaving them to their fate as infertile, worthless women in misery with the only option of prostituting themselves.19

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Even in children’s books, the Jewish male was illustrated as a sexualized peril. Like other sources printed in the Third Reich, they had the common goal of stereotyping Jews, making them visually recognizable through their dress code, facial features and their gestures of inherently evil behavior. If the Germans did not heed the warnings by Plischke (and other Nazi “experts”), the message seemed, the German nation would face an existential crisis with infertile women of inferior, degenerate blood. To inhibit further racial destruction, Nazi propaganda made use of the most simplistic visual and textual language to make it easily discernible to every German citizen to recognize a Jew by his looks and his behavior.
In seemingly more scientific literature, such as *Rassenschande*, the author queried:

Who does not know him, the oriental youth with his flat feet, dark curls, the cigarette in his flabby lower lips (*schlaffen Unterlippen*) under a crooked nose – dressed too colorfully, who with his brazen smiles wanders on the streets of the big city? He is lurking for blonde, young girls; once he has found one that is appealing enough for his oriental appetite, he starts his attack (*fest aufs Korn nehmen*). 20

Following cake, fine liquor, a visit to the cinema and a tavern, the Jew takes the girl to some cheap accommodation or the nearby park to do his deed. Plischke insistently cautioned German girls by use of word and image that if they did not listen to this warning, they would devalue themselves and forsake the greatest happiness that awaited all German women: motherhood. 21

Fig. 13. Left: “Infertile” *Der Stürmer*, July 1936 Fig. 14: Propaganda Flier, “German Woman! Keep your blood pure. You carry the heritage of the future. Strangers must not be able to reach for you,” 1944.

Though educating Germans about the criminal nature of Jews was the primary objective, antisemitic propaganda also served to entertain, using eye-catching and humorous images. The sexual material naturally made it interesting to young people, as Randal Bytwerk noted, mostly adolescents who were still wet behind the ears. 22 First and foremost, however, antisemitic

20 Ibid., 47.
21 Ibid., 48-50.
propaganda meant to culturally segregate Jews from German social life. As part of the new Nationalist Socialist education, an attempt was made to indoctrinate German youth and adults and make them believe in the Jewish conspiracy of Germany’s disintegration (Zersetzung) from within. As the figures drawn from children’s books, the more “scientific” works by Plischke, or the widely-read periodicals like Der Stürmer all indicate as part of their strategy, the Nazis used the methods of describing an alleged crime, interpreting it by hyperbolically foreshadowing the fatal consequences of the crime, stigmatizing the Jew as a member of the out-group through visual representations of his physiognomy, and in the final step, criminalizing the Jewish male based on his looks and behaviors.

In order to embed a social awareness of the alleged Jewish crime of racial defilement into German consciousness, the Nazi representations of Jewish men as rapists and race defilers needed to be a constant, unchanging theme, repetitively recurring in the papers, in the form of short articles with simple language, brief descriptions and a clear appeal to emotions through exaggerated caricatures and graphic dramatization. The pictures and photos used thereby took on a performative and persuasive force. They represented visual texts that were complementary to the written texts. Particularly the emotional component was crucial. Antisemitic texts and images seemingly galvanized enough Germans to bring their behaviors in line with the messages of Nazi propaganda. It was thus quite common for Germans to denounce couples living in mixed marriages. The typical target was a Jewish man and a non-Jewish German woman – accusing both of racial defilement and exposing them to social ridicule by making them march through the streets.


wearing self-incriminating signs. According to Alexandra Przyrembel, cultural imagery and social experience were both part of a process of assigning shame to the victims that helped create feelings of enmity toward Jews within society.²⁶

The Nazis hoped to achieve their goal of raising social awareness of the pathological and criminal Jewish male by referring to real-life cases.²⁷ Andrea Haibl has argued that antisemitic illustrations worked best when they succeeded in expressing actuality and authenticity.²⁸ Thus, the caricatures, supported by short articles in papers like Der Stürmer, generally referred to actual court cases or criminal investigations. For this reason, the various Nazi papers increasingly started to make use of photographs, as they intended to communicate a higher degree of authenticity and factuality pertaining to sexual crimes.

Fig. 15. Left: A staged photograph of Oskar Danker of Cuxhaven July 1933. The sign around his neck rhymes: “I, the Jew Boy, only take German girls to my room.” Fig. 16. Right: Article and photograph of Julius Rosenberg of Gelsenkirchen, Die Nationalzeitung, August 1935.

While it is difficult to evaluate the effects that Nazi racial-sexual propaganda had on shaping general attitudes, public opinion and actual behaviors towards Jews within German society

²⁸ Haibl, Das Zerrbild als Stereotyp, 22 & 46.
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– and some historians have rightly questioned the efficacy of Nazi propaganda29 – it is important to keep in mind that these antisemitic sexual discourses with their graphic imageries did not occupy a marginal presence in socio-cultural life, instigated by a few state-owned print magazines such as *Der Stürmer*, *Der Angriff* or *Der Völkische Beobachter*. Instead, the use of body images (Körperbilder) that Nazi antisemitism relied on became hegemonic.30 The vilification of Jewish male race defilers – among other antisemitic discourses – penetrated deeply into the cultural fabric of German norms and values and engulfed ordinary Germans in their lives.

Even print media, such as local newspapers that did not have as their primary function to incite antisemitic hatred week after week, comprehensively covered cases of racial defilement in German courts and thus contributed to disseminating tropes of the “evil Jew”. The movie industry produced specifically-themed antisemitic propaganda camouflaging it as documentaries such as *Der Ewige Jude*. Yet, through more implicit channels, entertainment films such as *Jud Süß* – which Saul Friedländer coined “the most effective of all Nazi anti-Jewish films” – further enhanced such monolithic images of Jews.31 *Jud Süß* was very popular, drawing more than twenty million viewers into the theatres. The scene in which the movie’s protagonist, the Jew Süß Oppenheimer32, rapes

29 According to Randall Bytwerk and Wolfgang Benz, the notorious antisemitic documentary *The Eternal Jew*, for instance, was not a major box office hit. See Randall Bytwerk, *Bending Spines: The Propagandas of Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004), 213 and Wolfgang Benz, *Der Ewige Jude: Metaphern und Methide Nationalsozialistischer Propaganda* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2010), 139. It seems that Germans, especially during the war, longed for entertainment films, dramas, comedies and love stories and where by and large saturated by antisemitic “documentary” propaganda. I would also add that much scholarly focus has been on films, the trilogy of antisemitic films *Jud Süß*, *Der Ewige Jude* and *Die Rothschilds* in particular, that were all produced in the 1940s during the war and not on antisemitic propaganda in the early years of the Third Reich, when shaping popular attitudes was still a primary and crucial objective by the Nazis. By the early 1940s, the Jewish question had lost much resonance in society, because, on the one hand, Germans were preoccupied by the war and their own war-related problems, and on the other hand, the “Jewish Question” had been largely resolved. With Jews having been deported, Germans had little need in being reminded of an alleged Jewish threat, including racial defilement.


32 The indictment of Joseph Süß Oppenheimer (1698-1738) represents a famous case of a German Jew who was tried in court. The case subsequently acquired a legendary status and was subject to several literary productions and in the Third Reich a motion picture. Oppenheimer was an influential court Jew in Württemberg. When his protector, the
a young woman seems to have had a powerful effect upon the audience. Some people were so moved, according to Robert Herzstein, that after the show, they screamed curses at the Jews: “Kick the last Jews out of Germany.”

Even though Nazi propaganda’s impact on Germans’ antisemitic beliefs retains sufficient momentum for further debate, based on the evidence that enough Germans were enticed to participate in the project of identifying cases of Jewish racial defilement, Nazi propaganda seemed to have been successful. *Der Stürmer* had a print circulation of over 500,000 by 1944 and an even greater reach due to the fact the papers were shared among subscribers, within the family for instance, but also exhibited publicly in showcases on the street. In fact, due to its omnipresence in

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Duke Karl Alexander of Württemberg suddenly died in 1737, Oppenheimer was arrested and accused of various crimes, including fraud, embezzlement, treason, and accepting bribes. While these aspects of economic and political antisemitism come out strongly in the 1940 production, the inclusion of Oppenheim’s alleged lecherous, sexual moves against respectable young married women (the rape scene in particular) were meant to have a sensationalizing effect among the viewers. Oppenheim was sentenced to death in 1738.

German socio-cultural life, it was unable with its staff of 300 to handle all the submissions and letters of denunciation it received.\textsuperscript{34} Only the most dreadful cases, according to the paper, were brought to public attention.

Key to the publication of cases was, as Robert Gelatelly has shown, “the volunteered provision of information by the population at large about instances of disapproved behavior.”\textsuperscript{35} A 1937 Hamburg case exemplifies how far people’s participation that the Nazis relied on went when a seventeen year-old filed charges against an unidentified individual because he had witnessed a “Jewish-looking man with black hair, hooked nose and horn-rimmed glasses hug and take to his side a twelve-year-old girl.”\textsuperscript{36} Evidently, public participation and state propaganda were two sides of the same coin. Official antisemitic discourse reverberated sufficiently in society for it to take on a social dynamic of its own.

The impact of antisemitic racial-sexual propaganda in the Third Reich is telling not only in terms of how it infiltrated social-cultural life in Germany, but also how it indirectly constructed idealization of proper non-Jewish gender norms. Depicting the Jew as a threat could only have been effective and obtain contextual meaning if the Nazis could precisely define the side that was constructed as “normal” but threatened. Depicting Jewish men as threats reverberated with a general understanding of gender hierarchies in Nazi Germany. The sexually-loaded graphics and texts connoted a gendered understanding of how the Nazis envisioned their patriarchal state. In the caricatures, the Nazis generally depicted German women as inherently helpless and in need of a


\textsuperscript{36}Przyrembel, \textit{Rassenschande}, 213.
male protector, who would faithfully provide for and protect his family. On the other hand, the behavior of Jewish or non-Jewish men in using women only for their personal sexual pleasure and then leaving them impregnated to their own fate was disapproved of and socially condemned. The writer Wilhelm Stüwe, for instance, argued that there was no greater impertinence than cowardly abandoning a girl and turning her into an unmarried mother out of wedlock, leaving her and her child to misery.\(^{37}\) Though Stüwe did not explicitly refer to Jewish men in his writing, it was precisely this message that Nazi propagandists emphasized. The Jewish sexual seducer who used women solely for his own selfish reasons did not fulfil this role of an honorable German man as the respected father and head of his family.

Ironically, while in military discourses (Chapter 1) Jewish men were represented as effeminate, un-manly men who were inept at military service and thus not qualified to achieve military honors and respect, in the context of sexuality and racial defilement, Jewish men were depicted and classified as hyper-sexualized and marked with a kind of animalistic, bestial aggression, strong will and physical prowess. The German media cemented images of hypersexualized Jewish men in an effort to warn, even threaten the public, and in particular the unknowing youth and the feeble-minded, easy-to-influence German women.\(^{38}\) As Plischke elucidated in his book, “educating women is urgently warranted, as women [in 1934] are apparently still unaware of the menace of racial defilement and what it could mean to them and their descendants.”\(^{39}\)


\(^{38}\) The Nazis threatened German citizens to reveal their names if they were caught associating with Jews. The city of Konstanz, for instance, put up a poster at the Central Post Office in August 1933 with the following wording: “Konstanzer Christenmädels, die mit Judenschweinen verkehren, werden photographiert und im Stürmer veröffentlicht.” [Christian maidens who consort with Jewish pigs will get photographed and published in *Der Stürmer*], *See Die Lage der Juden in Deutschland 1933. Das Schwarzbuch – Tatsachen und Dokumente*, ed. Comité des Délégations Juives, Paris 1934 (Frankfurt: Ullstein, Reprinted Edition 1983), 465.

\(^{39}\) Plischke, *Rassenschade*, 5-6.
However, images of Jewish male race defilers evidently questioned Jewish masculinity itself. Though Jewish men were not depicted as helpless, weak and effeminate this time, but quite the opposite, aggressive, strong-willed and potent, Nazi propaganda assigned Jewish men too much masculinity, thus distancing them further from the hegemonic center of heterosexual norms. As Jewish men were hyper-masculinized and put into a corner with animals that were also driven by uncontrollable instincts and perversions, Jewish men were hardly made to look properly male. Instead, as racial defilers, they were marginalized.

3. Racial Defilement, Policy and Jewish Masculinity

Cultural images of the Jewish sexual aggressor that had been previously established were aggressively perpetuated in the Third Reich. This discursive emasculation through an animalistic hyper-sexualization of Jewish men by the Nazis intruded on the realm of legal discourses and policy, the focus of the following section.

Nazi leaders and decision-makers who instigated and sanctioned antisemitic propaganda hoped to convert discourse into policy. To prepare society for legal changes, Nazi leaders publicly insulted Jewish men on their alleged sexual misconduct. As David Welch has noted,

> [P]ropaganda campaigns might be used to prepare the public for some forthcoming anti-Jewish legislation… [They were] intended to heighten people’s awareness of their “Aryan” origins and characteristics. Antisemitic propaganda became so omnipresent that in terms of everyday journalism, few news items or articles could be published with such a slant.40

One of the most notorious propagandists, Julius Streicher, the governor of the Franconia district and editor-in-chief of *Der Stürmer*, claimed that defiling gentile women was a holy act for

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Jews. To support his argument Streicher relied on a variety of dubious passages from the Talmud.

In one his many defamatory speeches on the topic, Streicher proclaimed in 1935:

Alien albumin is the semen of a man of another race. Because of intercourse, the male semen is partially or totally absorbed by the female body. A single incident of intercourse is sufficient to poison her blood forever. She has taken in the alien soul along with the alien albumin. Even if she marries an “Aryan” man, she can no longer bear pure “Aryan” children, but only bastards in whose breasts dwell two souls and who physically look like members of a mixed race…. Now we know why the Jew uses every method of seduction he knows to shame German girls as early as possible, why the Jewish doctor rapes his female patients while they are drugged… The German girls, the German women, who absorb the alien semen of a Jew, can never again bear healthy German children.  

Adolf Hitler, too, harbored an obsession with alleged Jewish sexual perversion. In speech and writing starting in the 1920’s, he accused Jews of being the primary beneficiaries of prostitution and the cause of spreading sexually transmitted diseases. Hitler stressed in Mein Kampf that his observation of Jewish procurers in Vienna had converted him to antisemitism. “When thus for the first time I recognized the Jew as the cold-hearted shameless and calculating director of this revolting vice traffic in the scum of the big city, a cold shiver ran down my back.”

In a later passage, he stated that “the adolescent Jewish male lurks for hours, hoping to defile the blood of the young women. With all possible means, he tries to spoil the racial foundations of the people that he tries to enslave (unterjochen).” Based on the emphasis on Jewish sex crimes by leading National Socialists and Hitler himself, the introduction of racial legislation, the Nuremberg Race Laws of September 1935 in particular, constituted a predictable and logical step on the road to radical antisemitism with direct implications for Jewish masculinities.

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41 Bytwerk, Julius Streicher, 143-144.
2. The Question of Race and Sex

The increasing concerns about sexual relations, intermarriage and miscegenation among Germans and Jews promoted calls for government intervention, and the Nuremberg Race Laws not only provided a de jure definition of Jewishness (a ruling that was based on one’s grandparents and their religious affiliations); one of the laws, the “Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People,” stipulated a ban on marriage and sexual relationships between Jews and non-Jews.\(^44\) The laws were intended to determine and shape the understandings of and behaviors by Germans towards their former Jewish fellow citizens, in public and in private.

While the Nuremberg Race laws were intended to segregate all Jews from non-Jewish Germans, regardless of sex and gender, the fine print of the laws had clear gendered connotations. Patricia Szobar has shown that according to the laws’ stipulations, only men were liable for prosecution. Upon violating the laws, women – both “Aryan” and Jewish – were not accountable for criminal prosecution and could be charged only as witnesses in race defilement proceedings (similar to §175 that outlawed homosexuality but only prosecuted male homosexuals).\(^45\) In other words, some of the racial legislation by the Nazi state stood in a direct relationship to the sexualized discourses and the propaganda that had developed in the late 19th century and that had centered on representations of hypersexualized Jewish men.\(^46\) Parallel to the stigmatization and criminalization of Jews in graphic caricatures as well as in text, the promulgation of racial legislation and the

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\(^{44}\) For a detailed legal history of the Nuremberg Race Laws, see Cornelia Essner, *Die Nürnberger Gesetze oder die Verwaltung des Rassenwahns, 1933-1945* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002).


\(^{46}\) It is interesting to note that in previous historical, Christian discourses, the victims of Jewish transgressions were typically young boys whom Jews used for ritual murder. Also, for some time, Jewish women were assigned a hypersexualized character who with their distinct female ways, seduced men for their pleasure. These images – male victims and female aggressor – disappeared, however, around the turn of the 19th century when religious stereotypes started to fall into desuetude and women took an increasingly marginal place in the public world of science, politics and economics. See Rainer Erb, “Der Ritualmord,” in *Bilder der Judenfeindschaft: Antisemitismus, Vorurteile und Mythen*, ed. Julius Schoeps (Eltville: Bechtermüntz, 1999), 74-80; Lori Lefkovitz, “Coats and Tales: Joseph Stories and Myths about Jewish Masculinity,” in *A Mensch Among Men: Explorations in Jewish Masculinity*, ed. Harry Brod (Berkeley: The Crossing Press, 1988), 25; Stefan Rohrbacher & Michael Schmidt, *Judenbilder: Kulturgeschichte antijüdischer Mythen und antisemitischer Vorurteile* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1991), 357.
enforcement thereof was grounded in a culture of conceptualizing the male as the aggressor and the female as the victim.

There were several reasons for an enforcement that differentiated between the sexes. On the one hand, as a German State Attorney of the Third Reich stated:

Man’s greater moral (sittliche) responsibility as well as the stronger self-control (Beherrschung) and resistibility (Widerstandskraft) in sexual matters vis-à-vis the easily manipulable (beeinflussbare) woman is the cause for the asymmetry of the law for the protection of the German blood.47

Women were spared prosecution as they were deemed by nature as passive in sexual activities and easily manipulable. In a male-dominated society, thus, women were judicially deemed less responsible. Female transgressions, such as entering into liaisons with Jewish men, were trivialized as somewhat natural and understandable. Guided by patriarchal principles, the Third Reich made the prosecution of women less central and important.48

On the other hand, as Patricia Szobar has stressed, “representations of Jewish women as sexually dominating would have rested uneasily alongside images of a powerful and aggressive “Aryan” masculinity.”49 Thus, it was vital for the Nazis to enhance patriarchal notions and bipolar images of male-female gender identities if they wanted to build a strong, masculinized state in which men took central leading roles. The Nazis depicted “Aryan” masculinity as naturally dominant.50 Furthermore, because men were viewed as the stronger sex that was in control, both

47 Quoted in Przyrembel, Rassenschande, 175. Trans. S. Huebel
48 It is not the author’s intention, however, to undermine the tremendous pain and suffering that women, Jewish and non-Jewish, had to endure, as a result of racial defilement accusations and prosecutions. While the law did not expect women to be prosecuted and tried, women could also be subjected to extrajudicial state sanctions. Women, but Jewish women in particular, could be held in protective custody for the duration of and for months following men’s trials. See Przyrembel, Rassenschande, 257-269; Szobar, “Telling Stories in Nazi Courts of Law”, 139. For a legal discussion on women’s exemption from the law, see Essner, Die Nürnberger Gesetze, 226-233. For a primary source of a Jewish woman who was accused and murdered, see Irene Eckler, Die Vormundschaftsakte, 1935-1958: Verfolgung einer Familie wegen “Rassenschande” (Schwetzingen: Horneburg Verlag, 1996).
50 Ibid., 148.
physically and mentally, and equipped with a stronger and rational mind, vilifying Jewish women for sexual transgression would have quintessentially meant that Jewish women could also act as seducers. It would have resulted in men – in this case the “Aryan” men who were portrayed in the media as the heroic soldiers, the protectors of family and fatherland – falling victim to female Jewish seduction. In short, “Aryan” masculinity would have been undermined; “Aryan” men would have appeared as passive, weak, and seducible. For this reason, to uphold the image of strong “Aryan” soldierly masculinity, Jewish women were left out of the understanding of racial legislation and enforcement. As men were the central figures in the campaigns of an idolized “Aryan” society, the counterpart to such an envisioned utopia was also male: the Jewish male race defiler. Both constructs, “Aryan” and Jewish masculinity were therefore co-dependent; cultural constructions and representations of women took a back seat in this dialectic.

The prosecution and enforcement of the Nuremberg Race Laws took a high toll on Jewish men, with sentences for Jewish men up to four years of penal servitude.⁵¹ Daniel Wachsmann calculated that between 1936 and 1939, about 420 men were sentenced every year for racial defilement, with the great majority being Jewish men, who generally received longer sentences than convicted non-Jewish men.⁵² This number, at first glance, might seem relatively small compared to the total Jewish population of over half a million in Germany. Furthermore, it is plausible to surmise that the actual number of court cases was artificially high because many of these investigated cases were based on false accusations or hearsay.

Nevertheless, antisemitic propaganda that orbited around Jewish transgressive sexuality cannot be measured by the number of court cases only. The cultural impact that Nazi caricatures and graphic presentations had on society must have been much greater. As the above section on

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⁵¹ Ibid., 139.
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propaganda demonstrated, the Nazis regulated their propaganda and disseminated their messages aggressively and perpetually, reaching millions of Germans. The pervasive images of Jewish racial defilement, therefore, implicitly contributed to Germans shaping generally negative attitudes of their Jewish neighbors. By internalizing the message of Jewish criminal sexual behavior, Germans participated in the stigmatization of Jews as an out-group.\(^{53}\)

Moreover, Germany’s press intensified its efforts to publicize court hearings, and newspapers like *Der Stürmer* increasingly reported on court cases that dealt with Jewish racial defilement. As inflammatory as the earlier caricatures, newspaper reports with photographs of court cases vilified the Jewish male, and the antisemitic representations were able to reach a large audience and readership outside the actual courtroom. Until 1938, state prosecutors had to report every trial of a Jew to the press division of the Reich Ministry of Justice, and some of them were then broadcast and publicized.

4. The Jewish Experience of Racial Defilement

The propaganda of Jewish criminal male sexuality and the implementation of antisemitic legislation that differentiated between the sexes essentially contributed to the cultural emasculation of Jewish men, who were constituted as the antithesis to normative definitions of German

\(^{53}\) A note on Jewish homosexuality is in order here. Oddly, while homosexuality was outlawed and prosecuted in the Third Reich, Nazi propaganda did not make a connection between discursive imagery of Jewish deviant sexuality and homosexuality. One reason might be that there had been no cultural tradition that linked antisemitism to homophobia. The second reason Jewish homosexuality is not featured in this chapter is that there is a striking lack of primary sources. In my research of hundreds of accounts of Jewish men written during or after the Third Reich, there were with one or two exceptions, virtually no references to Jewish male homosexuality. For more information on this topic see Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals* (New York: New Public Book, 1986); Heinz Heger, *Men with the Pink Triangle: The True, Life-And-Death Story of Homosexuals in the Nazi Death Camps* (Boston: Alyson Books, 1986); Gad Beck, *An Underground Life: Memoirs of a Gay Jew in Nazi Berlin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999). For female homosexuality, see Claudia Schoppmann, “National Socialist Policies towards Female Homosexuality,” in *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency and Experience from the 16th to the 20th Century*, eds. Lynn Abrams & Elizabeth Harvey (London: University College of London Press, 1996).
masculinity. But did Jewish men internalize this discursive and legal sexual antisemitism? The following section provides an overview of several cases of Jewish men falling victim to legal prosecution on charges of racial defilement and then moves on to analyze Jewish men’s perceptions and firsthand experiences and how they impacted their self-definitions as men.

Notably, an adaptation in Jewish men’s behaviors in direct relation to antisemitic sexualized discourses began prior to the promulgation of the Nuremberg Race Laws that in 1935 would prohibit sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews. In 1933, the nazified press increasingly focused on the issues of racial ideology and racial hygiene. It was at this time that the personal safety of Jewish men, in public institutions such as swimming pools and saunas started to become precarious. Starting in the 1920s, Nazi and other völkisch papers had reported on alleged cases of sexual misconducts by Jewish men in public baths. Jewish men were accused of luring and approaching “Aryan” women, followed by inappropriate behavior. In his memoir, Ernst Marcus (b. 1890), notary and lawyer in Breslau, recalled that:

The Jewish question reached a new stage. It suddenly turned into a problem of sexuality (Sexproblem). It started with incidents in public bathing houses. Jewish visitors were thought to have molested “Aryan” girls… Strangely enough, these cases occurred in a short time frame all over the country. Everywhere, Jews importuned “Aryan” girls… An “Aryan” seamstress told my wife that she had noticed unobtrusive and despondent Jewish men in the baths keeping themselves to the sides. Her acquaintances have had the same impression… At the same time, Der Stürmer, Das Schwarze Korps and other Nazi papers opened the barrage (Trommelfeuer). The reader of such papers had to ask himself how the Jews had all the time to betray the German people of its possessions and wealth if they apparently and uninterruptedly were preoccupied with seducing German girls and women.\(^{54}\)

Though Marcus mocks the problem of racial defilement, his comment represents a rare case of an observation by a non-Jewish individual, a seamstress in this case, who noticed a discernable.

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change in behavior and attitude among Jewish men specifically and in the context of Jewish sexuality. Public places like pools, where men and women could come into close physical contact with another while partially exposing their bodies, were constructed by the Nazis as an opportune habitat for Jewish men to lure, ogle and seduce female patrons. Due to staged public outcries in the press that were related to stories of alleged sexual misconduct in public pools, Jewish men reacted to the indictments of their sexual misbehaviors and modified their conduct accordingly either by staying away from pools altogether, or as Marcus’ recollection indicates, by trying to appear as inconspicuous as possible.

Yet, Jewish adaptation, if it was even noticed, did not stop the Nazis from further introducing antisemitic regulations. In the early to mid-1930s, Nazi propaganda deprived Jewish men of a normative masculinity, depicting them as sexual delinquents and pushing them to the margins of social life. The Nazis assigned such importance to notions of racial health and hygiene that public pools became one of the first places in Germany that prohibited Jews from attending. As they were seen as sexual perpetrators of women, their traditional “hunting grounds,” the public pools, were closed to them.

Unlike before with municipalities taking the initiative, with the promulgation of the Nuremberg Race Laws in September 1935 Jewish men became the subject of federal regulations, state prosecutions and police violence. As Robert Gelatelly has shown, the practicability of the law rested on the participation of and volunteered information by Germans. Hundreds of Jewish

55 This sexualization of the public sphere and the concomitant attempts by the Nazis to create a sense of fear of Jewish male assailters within society started with the rise to power in 1933, if not before. For instance, the print magazine the Hakenkreuzbanner wrote in an article titled “the Jewish Aquarium Herweck” on August 11, 1933: “With horn-rimmed glasses making them look intelligent, boldfaced Jewish youth are roaring in the water. From their gazing, the well-mannered girl (there has not been a well-mannered German girl in this pool in a long time) can only flee. We know these mongoloid eyes (Mongolenaugen).” See Die Lage der Juden in Deutschland 1933. Das Schwarzbuch – Tatsachen und Dokumente, ed. Comité des Délégations Juives, Paris 1934 (Frankfurt, Ullstein Verlag, Reprint 1983), 401. Trans. S. Huebel.

men were denounced for violations of the Nuremberg Race Laws. The reasons for denouncing Jewish citizens were complex and ranged from cases of personal jealousy or hopes for eliminating an economic competitor to outright antisemitic hatred.\(^{57}\)

The circumstances that could lead to arrest varied and were often of an arbitrary nature. In one case, a married Jewish man was riding his bicycle one day and accidentally collided with a female pedestrian. Apologizing for his inattention and as a form of compensation for the inconvenience he had caused, he invited the young woman for a cup of coffee. His misfortune was that a local Nazi party boss had witnessed the incident and reported him. His punishment was two months in jail.\(^{58}\) Jacob Georgsohn recalled that he too was denounced anonymously for racial defilement in 1936. After two weeks in pre-trial custody (\textit{Untersuchungshaft}), he was transferred to the concentration camp Hamburg-Fuhlsbüttel, though evidence did not suffice for an indictment.\(^{59}\) In other cases, when the available evidence did not suffice, or did not exist in the first place, the use of torture could coerce the accused to confess his crime. The Frankfurt wine merchant Frederick Weil (b. 1877) recounted such a story. When a sixty-year old married Jewish man was arrested for racial defilement, the Gestapo mistreated him so badly that he agreed to sign a declaration in which he confessed his criminal deed.\(^{60}\) Max Augenreich was arrested by two SA men when they spotted him and an “Aryan” girl in the movie theatre. He was sentenced to six months in jail in 1937, followed by forced labor assignments.\(^{61}\) Another Jewish man was convicted of racial defilement for glancing at a young “Aryan” girl across the street. The court ruled that

\(^{57}\) Gelatelly, \textit{The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy}.
\(^{61}\) Max Augenreich, “Antrag auf Anerkennung als Opfer des Faschismus,” GDW Berlin. As a forced laborer, he decided to escape his deportation in 1942 and went underground where he survived the war.
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“although the man had no physical or verbal contact with the girl, his glance had a clearly erotic basis.”  

Finally, in more extreme cases, particularly during the war, courts did not shy from delivering death penalties, regardless of the lack of evidence. One verdict read:

The fact that he pretended to be an “Aryan” to bypass the restrictions for Jews can be understood to some degree. But that he did not live in solitude and humbleness, but misused as much as possible the position that resulted from his camouflaging, is a Jewish impertinence... He unscrupulously had a go (heranmachen) at German women and girls and did not care if they were engaged or married. During intercourse, he did not make use of any protection and not only willfully accepted the possibility of conceiving a Jewish bastard, but called such an outcome desirable.

As these cases demonstrate, a considerable number of racial defilement cases were entirely based either on denunciations, vague assumptions and hearsay, or on fabricated indictment. Even cases of racial defilement that allegedly had occurred prior to the passing of the laws in 1935 could be investigated. All cases demonstrate that the introduction of legal steps in 1935 and the enforcement thereof were meant to ostracize and segregate “Aryan” Germans from Jews, following a cultural, discursive tradition that had previously focused on and personified the “evil Jew” as a male. When the Nazis began to codify and enforce their racially-based laws, in their formulation and enforcement the laws had strikingly gendered connotations and ramifications with Jewish men being at the center. The Nazis not only formulated racial legislation based on intertwined sexual and racial fetishes, but also implemented them radically and often without any real substantive grounding. Looking at a woman, greeting one another on the street, or going to the theatre with a female friend could be construed as sexually promiscuous and therefore illegal.

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64 The merchant Max Oppenheim (b. 1898) in Würzburg was reported in 1935 for having had sexual relations with German women up to 1930. The grounds for his arrest were that his past behavior, which had only recently come to light, had caused a public outcry. Allegedly, for his own safety, he was placed in “protective custody.” See Gelatelly, The Gestapo and German Society, 112.
behavior. Conceivably the Nazis had been intoxicated with their own propaganda and probably expected an even higher number of cases of racial defilement to surface once the legal enforcement had kicked in.

From the evidence presented above, it is striking that the myth of Jewish racial defilement not only constituted a fabricated manifestation of antisemitic hatred and sexual obsession, but that the laws were open to interpretation and could, in the form of denunciations by “ordinary” Germans, be applied in situations entirely unrelated to sexual matters and criminal behavior.66 In one such denunciatory letter sent to the police, the author of the letter wrote:

On my block the rumor was that the nineteen-year-old Auguste G. who had previously worked as a maid for the non-Aryan Rudolf H. and following the Nuremberg Race Laws was let go, maintained a love affair with him. This suspicion was soon enhanced when they could be observed greeting each other at the window or when she looked up to him [from the street]. Rudolf was never seen going out with his wife, and there is a rumor that she is going to divorce him due to his affair. Because the situation was getting too risky for him, he has abandoned his current residence. The get-togethers now take place on Thursdays at the entrance of her place, and they have been observed three times already… Under these circumstances, the suspicion is more than justified that racial defilement is taking place.67

As criminal investigations of racial defilement, often of an arbitrary nature, proliferated, German Jews began to observe, record and gradually internalize the new social realities. The elderly Albert Herzfeld noted in his diary on November 15, 1935, that he knew Jewish men who

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66 Gelatelly notes that Jews who had a criminal record were in particular danger. Friedrich Schleier, a Jewish butcher and Samuel Braunthal, a Jewish banker, had been in trouble with the law before 1933. In 1936, both men were reported to the Gestapo. Schleier was accused of trying to entice women to sleep with him; the charges against Braunthal were likewise vague, with no names or dates even mentioned, save that the Gestapo asked about his sexual partners before 1933. While there is no evidence of racial defilement after 1933, what Schleier and Braunthal had done before the seizure of power sealed their fate. Both were initially placed in preventative custody. Braunthal was eventually released and emigrated to the U.S., but Schleier was sent to Buchenwald where he died in 1940. Such cases illustrate how the Gestapo used the race laws to deal with persons it wanted to get rid of because of their criminal and promiscuous pasts.” Gelatelly, *The Gestapo and German Society*, 201.

67 Przyrembel, *Rassenschande*, 204.
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were extorted based on arbitrary accusations of racial defilement. In both cases, the accused could prove their innocence. The businessman Alfred Wolf (1898-1981) of Heilbronn also recalled in his 1969 memoir how his brother-in-law, Manfred Levy, the co-owner of an embroidery factory in Berlin with several hundred employees, was accused by one of his female employees for “pinching her buttocks.” He remembered how he and his wife perceived this as a deadly serious charge. “It was a matter of life and death. If Manfred would be found guilty, he would go to jail and from there to a concentration camp… The tension was unbearable.” Later, the judge acquitted Levy, upon which his wife “broke down and screamed.”

In a similar case, the businessman Erich Leyens (b. 1898) of Wesel was accused of Rassenschande on two separate occasions in 1936. In his memoir, he recalled that

I was summoned to appear in court… In the first case, a young “Aryan” woman had filed a suit charging me with being the father of her child. However, when she was confronted with me in court she declared, “But I have never seen this man in my life.” …As the courtroom erupted in laughter the charges were immediately dropped and I was allowed to go free… The second charge against me was more dangerous… [Only] the [accuser’s] fiancée’s courage saved me.

What Leyens, with a grain of ridicule and humor, tended to misapprehend in his memoirs is that the local Nazi party branch was probably responsible for the unfounded charges and likely expected to succeed with their accusations. As Leyens’ and the other cases demonstrate, in the years preceding World War II racial defilement was a commonly used strategy for discriminating against Jewish men by damaging their military and business reputations in society, sexually

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68 Homosexual men in Nazi Germany experienced a similar form of persecution when their “secrets” were discovered and blackmailed.
70 Alfred Wolf, Memoirs, LBINY ME263 MM82, 238-239.
criminalizing them through court convictions and brutalizing them in jails and concentration camps, where they would face especially harsh defamation, extortion and brutalization.

Some contemporary Jewish accounts of the time which Jewish émigrés collected and then published outside of Nazi Germany also evince the hysteria about racial defilement. One compendium, *Die Lage der Juden in Deutschland* from 1934, cited the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which in turn had cited press releases by the Hessian police:

Jews had lost all the warranted restraints toward German women and tried to approach them, causing uproars within society. The political police were therefore compelled to arrest and take into custody the guilty or those known Jews to whom public enrage (Erregung) could be addressed… All Jews therefore are again strongly advised to demonstrate natural (selbstverständlich) restraint.72

A few days later, again relying on police press releases, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* announced that despite repeated warnings several Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps. “Again, a local Jewish merchant has tried in obnoxious (anstößig) ways to approach a Christian girl. The accused, like several of his racial comrades (Rassegenossen), was taken to the concentration camp Osthofen.”73 As Kim Wünschmann has analyzed, these men convicted (or still being investigated) for racial defilement were often brutally treated in such camps, sometimes resulting in death.74

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72 *Die Lage der Juden in Deutschland 1933. Das Schwarzbuch*, 466. Trans. S. Huebel
73 Ibid., 467.
74 According to Kim Wünschmann, imprisonment of Jewish race defilers differed from other protective custody cases. For instance, Hans Stein, who was deported to Dachau in 1933, was identified to camp officials as a Jew who had chastised a female employee in his shop after having abused her for animalistic indecencies. As a result, race defilers suffered harsh treatment once inside the camp. SS guards attacked and beat Lewis Schloss so brutally that he died of his injuries in Dachau. Isaak Krieger, who was married to a non-Jewish wife, recalled: “Immediately after Hitler came to power nobody knew us anymore… In the village, she [his wife] was just a Jew whore. The landlord forbade my wife to live in the house. Overnight, we were branded as criminals… I was sent to [the concentration camp] Osthofen, right at the beginning of 1933. I was there for over four months, badly beaten up.” See Kim Wünschmann, *Before Auschwitz: Jewish Prisoners in the Prewar Concentration Camps* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 51-53. Patricia Szobar also revealed cases of torturing Jewish race defilers in Sachsenhausen through suffocation in a broom closet or by being hosed freezing water with fatal consequences. See Szobar, “Telling Sexual Stories,” 141.
Beyond a seemingly small number of court convictions and possible incarcerations in jails and concentration camps, the Nazi discourses on racial defilement directly and indirectly affected the lives of many more Jewish men and women. The actual impact of the Nazi hunt for Jewish male race defilers, in fact, must not be limited to a study of court cases alone and the sentenced individuals who ended up in court, prison or concentration camp. Diaries, testimonies and memoirs validate the argument that the Nazi discourse on Jewish sexual delinquency had a palpable and radial impact on the lives of Jewish men and women.

The merchant Alfred Schwerin of Pirmasens (b. 1892) pointed out in his memoirs that the purveyors of print media in the Third Reich had been collectively organized by the Nazi press office and were instructed to sell Nazi papers in the most visible manner, at the best location within their stores and kiosks. Particularly Der Stürmer, according to Schwerin, was always visible and had a not-to-be-underestimated influence on the uneducated and less educated in society. Most of all, however, it impacted the youth who were already hungry for erotic images and scandalous stories.75 In a similar fashion, Alfred Wolf evoked the effect Nazi propaganda had on him:

Nazi newspapers excelled in dirt and filth. They talked about circumcised pigs. It is very difficult to imagine the level to which these people descended and the atmosphere that surrounded us. The feeling of being isolated, watched, avoided is utterly depressing. … Once a gentile lady stopped me on the street, which was as kind as it was courageous. I said you don’t have to talk to a circumcised pig.76

These examples demonstrate that the propaganda efforts of sexualizing Jews did not occur in a social vacuum unnoticed by German Jews. The introduction and sanctioning of graphic antisemitic vulgarity and slander by the state was noticed, processed and internalized by Jewish

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75 Alfred Schwerin, Memoirs, LBINY ME 593 MM 69, p. 2 Karl-Heinz Reuband’s statistical analysis of Der Stürmer readership agrees that the paper served the function of “sex and crime” entertainment and did not necessarily attract people due to its antisemitic content. Reuband, however, also notes that the educated were equally attracted to the paper, if not more, probably due to the fact they were used to reading more at home and in school. See Reuband, “Die Leserschaft des Stürmer.”

76 Wolf, Memoirs, p. 227.
and non-Jewish Germans. Time and again, German Jews made references to the pervasiveness of *Der Stürmer* and other mass media with (sexualized) antisemitic imagery in postwar memoirs. The act of observing the radicalization in antisemitic propaganda with its often sexualized content was a central element of the Jewish experience in the Third Reich and manifested itself as part of Jewish and gentile consciousness.

Besides personal reflections in diaries and memoirs, the effects of sexualized propaganda on Jews percolated further, transcending mental internalization and starting to shape different patterns of actual behavior among German-Jewish men. As part of the linguistic violence of Nazi propaganda that intruded into people’s everyday lives, the term racial defilement itself took on a pervasive, mystical force.\(^\text{77}\) Some came to fear potential, arbitrary accusations against them for violations based on the new and common usage of the language of racial defilement. Some Jewish men began to anticipate possible scenarios if they were caught in this maelstrom of sexual antisemitism. Alfred Meyer (b. 1920) remembered the impact the Nuremberg Race Laws and Nazi propaganda had on him:

> I remember one case. A Jewish man had a female friend who was “Aryan”. He went to great pains to avoid all physical contact with her, but was accused of having masturbated in her presence while she was undressing. Convicted of having defiled the “Aryan” race, he was sentenced to years in the penitentiary and castrated. Whether true or false, such stories impressed me deeply, in consequence of which I hardly dared during the years of my sexual awakening to even look at female persons. For a boy between 13 to 19 years of age that is not altogether easy.\(^\text{78}\)

The adolescent Salomon Perel (b. 1925), while hiding his Jewish identity in the Hitler Youth in wartime Germany, remembered how fearful he was about his Jewish identity qua his circumcision getting revealed by his peers and how he shied away from meeting girls when his buddies, in their


\(^\text{78}\) Alfred Meyer, *My attitudes towards Germany*, LBINY AR25075, Box 1, Folder 1, p.5.
2. The Question of Race and Sex

free time, met with girls from the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, the young girls’ equivalent of the Hitler Youth. The later famous TV quiz-show master Hans Rosenthal (1925-1987) equally recalled how the concept of racial defilement had had a direct and immediate impact on his social behavior. Around 1941 in Berlin, not wearing the Yellow Badge, the teenager Rosenthal met a same-aged girl whom he liked:

What a madness! … [In this moment] I completely forgot in what situation I was. I started to have doubts. Racial Defilement! Prison! Death Penalty! Terms that one could read in the press every day buzzed through my head. I, the racial defiler! Rosenthal, ridden by fear, decided to cancel the date that he had planned for the following night.

Whereas Perel and Rosenthal in their postwar memoirs remembered their fears and placed them in the context of Jewish criminal behavior and racial defilement, the journalist Max Reiner (1883-1944) went into even more detail in his contemporary account:

I was told that there were women who made it their business to invite Jewish men to make excursions (*Ausflüge*) or a visit to a café in order, under threat of reporting them to the police, to ask for greater amounts of money… [One day] I noticed … in the evening, walking home in some side streets that were not frequented by women of the demi-monde (*Halbwelt*), that women who did not look like their profession was what the French call *daire d’amour*, addressed me. They did not even suggest a tender get-together, but both times, they lamented their miseries, asking for financial assistance. I sidestepped them quickly. I cannot claim that in both cases they were out for extortion, but I am not sure that if I had stopped and not given them anything or only very little, they would not have started to scream and approach other pedestrians for help from the Jew’s race-defiling (*rassenschändischen*) overtures… I am wondering if not some cases of alleged racial defilement that were punished so gruesomely, started and ended with such similar attempts by approaching money-hungry women.

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80 Introduced in November 1941, the Yellow Badge was a cloth patch that Jews were ordered to sew on their outer garments to mark them as Jews in public.
Like Rosenthal and Perel, Reiner exhibited an acute awareness of the centrality that the Nazis assigned to the concept of racial defilement in 1930s Germany. Even more, he not only internalized the discourse but projected it onto his body, using it as a defining and salient feature of Jewish masculinity. He implicitly accepted that his appearance was Jewish and that women could also recognize in him the Jew. This internalization had a profound impact on his demeanor and his self-understanding as a man. Reiner altered his social behavior by trying to avoid any contact with suspicious women – in ominous situations such as being out at night in an empty street.

It is crucial to understand, however, that Jewish men internalized primarily the meanings of sexual propaganda and imagery and with it the possible social implications, but not the message itself. Jewish men did not regard their sexualities and bodies as diseased or distorted and try to alter their bodies based on the physiognomic features the Nazis tried to hyperbolize in their graphic images. The historical evidence does not substantiate a hypothesis that Jewish men began to question their physical appearance, to examine the size of their noses or lips, change the shape of their faces. Jewish men did not negotiate their bodies and identify themselves specifically as German-Jewish male through their bodies though the discourses of a distinct Jewish (male) physicality had emerged in the 19th century. Though the body as a “site of experience,” as Kathleen Canning has shown, is intricately linked to gender and some Jewish men in the Third Reich did indeed assess their bodies, or parts thereof, based on the sexualized images disseminated by the Nazis, Jewish men experienced their marginalization first in a social-cultural context rather than a physical-bodily sense.  

The enforcement of racial legislation did not even halt in the realm of prostitution. In one case, a Jewish man was arrested in Hamburg when he met up with a prostitute. In another case, in

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Frankfurt in 1938, a Jewish man was found guilty though no sexual intercourse had taken place. The court determined that the law was violated as the terms of the Nuremberg Laws involved the protection of German honor in addition to German blood. The accused was sentenced to two years and two months of jail with a possible extension.  

Finally, Jewish women too were directly affected by the Nazi criminalization of Jewish men as sexual aggressors. Some, like Hertha Nathorff (1895-1993), simply noted the pervasiveness of talk about racial defilement: “So many people are getting arrested for racial defilement or attempt thereof. It is the catchphrase of the day. School children speak about and read about it in Der Stürmer.” In another diary entry, she noted that “innocent men get arrested and ruined.”  

Isaak Behar (1923-2011) recalled how his mother was in constant fear for her son in wartime Berlin when he went out at night without wearing the badge and after he had fallen in love with a young “Aryan” woman at work.

My mother, who hardly left the house… was in constant fear... I knew about my mother’s fear. But I could not believe my luck. A young woman, a very beautiful one on top, was in love with me… a woman who, even if it was just for two hours every Sunday, gave me the feeling of being a normal, young man.  

Behar’s mother, on top of her worries about her son not wearing the required badge and being out after curfew, must have pictured her son getting seen or caught in the presence of his girlfriend and his son’s subsequent punishment. Yet Behar, by going out, resisted the new gender identity that the Nazis were imposing on Jewish men.

The above examples demonstrate that the Nazi discourse on racial defilement could become a lived reality for many German Jews, even without the “crime” having been committed.

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84 Gelatelly, *The Gestapo and German Society*, 199.
86 Isaak Behar, *Versprich mir, dass Du am Leben bleibst: Ein jüdisches Schicksal*, 4th ed. (Berlin: List Verlag, 2013), 101. It is unclear if his father also knew about Isaak’s romance.
2. The Question of Race and Sex

It effectively contributed to a re-configuration or understanding thereof of Jewish masculinity; depicted as sexual criminals, Jewish men were categorized as a threat by the state and by a participating society, a process that in turn made Jewish men adapt to – or feel forced to adapt to – antisemitic imagery and social legislation. As Behar’s memoir further demonstrates, the re-configuration process of Jewish masculinity – like the case of Jewish military masculinity – was not a domain entirely reserved for men and to be used by men. Jewish women, such as mothers caring for the sons or wives fearing for their husbands, also participated in this process of allocating men a new status.

An additional stipulation of the Nuremberg Race Laws forbade Jewish households from hiring “Aryan” maids under the age of forty-five as a measure to prevent sexual assaults by Jewish men.87 Jewish memoirs and diaries are replete with references to this ruling by the Nazi state. Peter Gay (b. 1923) remembered in his postwar memoirs:

If this statute had not been so vicious in intent and disruptive in results, we could have laughed at this childishness, as though every male Jewish employer could be expected to rape his female “Aryan” employees as long as they were sexually attractive and capable of childbearing. This provision enacted into law the lewd fantasies that the *Stürmer* was peddling weekly and that cost us the services of Johanna Hantel, whom I much liked.88

Similarity, the elderly Albert Herzfeld, born 1865, noted in his diary on December 7, 1935:

There are 200,000 Jews left in Germany, of which half were men, of which at least half are children or elderly, leaving about 50,000 adult males, who, in all seriousness, cannot seriously jeopardize a people of 66 million! How should they? They are content if they are left alone because they have enough to worry about arguing their future existence and the preservation of their families.89

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87 The age of forty-five was chosen as “Aryan” women of that age were no longer deemed to be in child-bearing age and thus theoretically could not bear a child of mixed Jewish blood. Aryan maids under the age of 45, moreover, were only dismissed from a Jewish household if a Jewish male of the age of 16 or above lived in it. Thus, a Jewish household with men was not determined by the legal age of 21 but 16, the age when adolescent men were thought to be able to conceive a child. It is estimated that approximately 60,000 “Aryan” women were affected by their forced dismissals from working in Jewish households. See Essner, *Die Nürnberger Gesetze*, 235-240.


Others, such as the merchant Carl Schwabe (1891-1967) went even further not only to feel indignant about the impertinence and the embarrassment the laws meant for respectable citizens such as him, but also to question the legality of specific verdicts. When he was ordered by the local police to dismiss his Austrian maid (who did not meet the age requirement), he went to court and successfully made the case that the law had no validity for foreigners, including female maids. Thus, he was permitted to continue employing his maid. By showing the courage to defy the legal system in Nazi Germany, Schwabe not only repudiated the orders of the local administration, but also indirectly challenged the Nazi insult of classifying Jewish men as sexual predators.

Conclusion

The centrality of racism and antisemitism in the endeavor of constructing a Nazi utopia defined by racial purity and health has been thoroughly researched by historians. What historiography has lacked so far is a detailed scholarly investigation that intersects Nazi antisemitism, propaganda and Jewish gender and pays particular attention to the experiences and perspectives of the central objects of the sexualized propaganda effort, Jewish men.

Antisemitic propaganda in the Third Reich was not exclusively about Jewish sexuality and racial defilement but drew deeply on other historic discourses that were political, economic and cultural in nature. As Jeffrey Herf has argued, Nazi Germany saw its enemy as a conspiracy of non-equals and “international Jewry stood at its center.” Yet, even in non-sexualized propaganda, the Nazis overwhelmingly depicted Jewish men. As the historian Marion Kaplan has rightly

92 The writer and professor Johann von Leers, for instance, in his many slanderous antisemitic works, attempted to educate the public by illustrating easily recognizable Jewish faces. Of the sixty-four illustrations in his book Juden sehen Dich an! (Jews are looking at you!), sixty-one were male faces. Of the three women portrayed in the book, two, including Rosa Luxemburg, were no longer alive. See Johann von Leers, Juden sehen Dich an! (Berlin:
asserted, Nazi racism was not gender-neutral: “Propaganda castigated Jewish men as cheats and traitors, depicting them as greedy bankers and pimps.”

Jews, depicted as Jewish men, had long been blamed for orchestrating international capitalism to the detriment of the German working class, staging the Bolshevik-Judeo revolutions of 1917/1918 and endorsing modernity with its immoral, decadent ways of living. The exporting of propaganda with racially and sexually intertwined fantasies of degeneration into the German public mind constituted only one strategy – albeit an important and influential one – in the definition, criminalization and isolation of German Jews from non-Jewish Germans.

As Annette Timm has shown, the discourses and policies of racism and sexuality were of vital importance to the Nazis. In their incessant references to ostensibly defending middle-class morals and norms of proper sexuality, the Nazis amalgamated antisemitic racism with discourses of sexuality, establishing a fear-mongering, desperate scenario according to which Jewish men through their hypersexualized nature were threatening the “Aryan” race. In figurative language in print media and motion pictures, the vilification of Jews progressed through the ubiquitous utilization of male images as signifiers for sexual predation.

Such depictions of German-Jewish men were emasculating as they marginalized all Jewish men, regardless of age, class or even ethnicity from the accepted conventions and behaviors that defined hegemonic masculinity. Thus, constructions of promiscuous Jewish male sexuality did not occur in a vacuum, disconnected from other cultural discourses but in a lively context of social

Nationalsozialistisches Druck- und Verlagshaus, 1933). See also Judentum und Gaunertum. Eine Wesens- und Lebensgemeinschaft (Berlin: 1940); Die Verbrechernatur der Juden (Berlin: P. Hochmuth Verlag, 1944).

93 Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 235. In an essay, Kaplan similarly argued that “Nazi propaganda put the emphasis on Jewish men, the “Jew” or der Jude – usually strangely distorted males with huge noses and stomachs. These rulers of the world were occasionally accompanied by an obese woman bedecked in jewelry and her grotesque children, but generally it was the Jewish male whom the Nazis caricatured and vilified.” See Kaplan, “The Jewish Response,” 71.

relations. To manifest images of evil Jewish masculinity, the media disseminated not only images of the Jewish man, but simultaneously propagated its counterpart, the exemplary “Aryan” male in his strong, healthy body. As Daniel Wildmann has rightly pointed out, in the Third Reich the male “Aryan” body was not defined in its relation to the female body but in relation to the non-Aryan.\(^{95}\)

In their graphic and textual attacks against Jewish men and women, the Nazis could only succeed in re-shaping ordinary Germans in their views of Jews by instilling a counter-image to the “Aryan” hero. The Nazis thus relied on relational juxtapositions of idealized and vilified images of Good and Evil. In their propaganda, the Jew qua the Jewish man was generally ugly, unhealthy, obese, un-athletic and acting ominously in the presence of women and children, while its counterpart, the “Aryan” man, was portrayed as trustworthy and hard-working and with an aesthetically beautiful naked body, showcasing strong muscles and resembling a Greco-Roman warrior.\(^{96}\) Especially nakedness represented vitality, purity and health, while Jewish men were depicted as dressed up, either in shaggy clothes or businessmen’s attire. Either way, the implication was that they hid their diseased bodies and devious sexuality.

Jewish men came to process the idea of racial defilement and adapted to the new social realities with a preponderance of news coverage of race defilement trials. Yet, even though Jewish men’s gendered identities were discursively marginalized in Nazi propaganda and while in their reactions and social behaviors some certainly altered their public appearance and behaviors, in their gendered self-understandings, Jewish men did not necessarily view themselves as emasculated or as a distinct group of sexualized victims. One should also not overlook the fact that in patriarchal systems, including but not limited to the misogynistic Nazi regime, women


\(^{96}\) Hödl, *Die Pathologisierung des jüdischen Körpers*, 153.
regardless of religion and race are more prone to fall victim to sexual and other violence. The racial defilement discourse by the Nazis did not reverse this.

What had changed was the fact that due to the omnipresence of racial defilement discourses and legislation, Jewish men were at greater risk and had to be more careful, particularly the ones who (thought they) looked Jewish, something that will be followed up on in chapter 5 on violence. Nevertheless, as this chapter has also shown, perhaps with some extra care German-Jewish men maintained forms of sociability and continued meeting and interacting with women, especially Jewish men of a lower age and who were not yet married.

In his influential work on sexuality, Michel Foucault has argued that starting in the 18th-century, elites such as social reformers and medical experts and not least the state itself sought to steer social norms of proper physical appearance, bodily functionality as well as an appropriation of sexual norms. Conceptualizing the term bio-power, biological knowledge as a basis for socio-political control of individuals and groups, Foucault argued:

There emerged the analysis of the modes of sexual conduct... [as well as] those systematic campaigns which... tried to transform the sexual conduct of couples into a concerted... political behavior. In time these new measures would become anchorage points for the different varieties of racism of the 19th and 20th centuries. It was essential that the state know what was happening with its citizens’ sex and the use they made of it, but also that each individual be capable of controlling the use he made of it. Between the state and the individual, sex became an issue and a public issue no less; a whole web of discourses, special knowledges, analyses and injunctions settled upon it.97

Foucault might be criticized for overemphasizing the role of modernity and the rise of an allegedly new, paternalistic state, whose ruling institutions started to watch over its citizens’ behaviors. At the same time, the author downplays the fact that such dynamics of social control had already existed in pre-modern times. Yet Foucault is shrewdly right that the modern...
centralized state took an ideological interest in steering social perceptions and individual behaviors, especially under totalitarian regimes. The Nazis assigned Jewish men a promiscuous sexuality and diseased body while they praised images of pure, healthy and strong “Aryan” soldiers of the nation. While Jewish men sought to adhere to and perform hegemonic masculinity, based on heterosexual norms, the state took a new interest in people’s private lives as it figured the nation’s health was only obtainable if each and every one conceded to the norms of “do’s” and “don’ts” prescribed by a paternalistic state. Projecting an internal enemy, the Nazis despised Jewish men as un-soldierly and effeminate (Chapter 1) but also hypersexualized ‘others’ to be culturally and physically removed from German life.

Finally, it is crucial to note that the configurations of masculinities happen in a co-dependent relationship and can intersect with and impact one another. Though Jewish men were castigated as sexual threats, their military masculinity that they had built over years and that the Nazis tried to take away continued to matter and could even partially invalidate the discursive and legal assault on them. Some Jewish male “sex offenders” received lesser sentences due to their voluntary military service in World War I.98 Military service still carried meaning, even for so-called race-defilers. On the other hand, in one case, a Jewish man was given an exceptionally harsh sentence as the woman he had an affair with was married to the most honorable type of man in the Third Reich, a Wehrmacht soldier. His attack on Aryan military masculinity resulted in seven years of imprisonment.99

Chapter 3
Jewish Masculinities and the Importance of Work
in the Third Reich

Whereas the Nazis attempted to deprive Jewish men of their cultural-military honor and discredit them as war veterans, while simultaneously also targeting them through sexualized-racial propaganda, in material terms the vast majority of German Jews – both men and women – first and foremost faced the socio-economic challenge of making a livelihood in Nazi Germany. Economic antisemitism tried to push the Jewish presence in the economic sphere to the margins and eventually eliminate it altogether. In dismissing Jewish civil servants and employees in private firms, as well as boycotting, vandalizing and then “Aryanizing” Jewish businesses throughout the 1930s, the Nazis attacked a Jewish economic existence, inadvertently prompting changes in the realm of gender relations and the construction of German-Jewish masculinity. It is these changes that constitute the focus of this chapter. As Anna-Madeleine Halkes-Carey has recently argued in her work on (non-German) Jewish masculinities during the Holocaust:

[There is a] small body of work which, whilst not considering in detail the gender identities of men, nonetheless draws clear conclusions concerning the negative gender implications of loss of work, problems of supporting one’s family, and the consequent slide into depression. However, not only are these conclusions extremely perfunctory and reliant on limited research, but, perhaps more significantly, they have been drawn in the service of another master. Written predominantly by historians whose primary interest lies in understanding the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish female gender identity, much of what we know about Jewish masculinity is no more than a corollary of important and successful attempts to show the significant role that Jewish women played in enabling families and communities to endure and survive the Holocaust.²

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1 An abridged version of this chapter was presented at the German Historical Institute Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in Hamburg, June 7-10, 2017. I am grateful to all participants for their feedback.
This chapter analyzes the concept of work masculinity and its significance on Jewish masculine identity in the Third Reich, in particular Jewish men’s struggle to stay in meaningful employment and the gendered implications when being deprived thereof. This chapter argues that Nazi economic antisemitism violently challenged the majority of Jewish men in their roles as providers. For many, the loss of income and the means to provide for their families as well as their forced idleness and inactivity resembled a state of powerlessness and emasculation. As they could no longer work and provide, many felt they were no longer “real men.” Yet, Jewish men’s perceptions of this emasculating process of being denied the means to provide for themselves and their families varied significantly and could generate an array of alternative and defiant responses. While unemployment could signify a loss of status and respect that triggered in some middle- and upper-class men drastic changes in their demeanor, ranging from withdrawals into self-isolation to the development of depressive behaviors and even suicides, for other men the prospect of losing meaningful work had less radical implications. Instead, they persisted in preserving their masculine identities as “working men” by taking the Nazi attacks on their socio-economic foundations as a challenge that called for the defense and preservation of their masculine roles as providers. Through successfully fighting to remain in their accustomed positions or acquiring different means to make an income for their dependents, and finally even finding some gendered dignity and pride in performing forced labor during the war, many Jewish men resisted Nazi emasculation by economic means.

In the first section, I will illuminate the origins of the 19th-century bourgeois gender concept of work masculinity and how antisemitic discourses and policies up to the period of the Third Reich questioned Jewish men’s masculinity as men of labor. The second section focuses on the economic struggles of German Jews and the process of emasculation of some Jewish men, whereas
the third section emphasizes alternative ways for Jewish men to resist and find meaning in continued or new forms of employment as ways of preserving their identities as the masculine provider.

1. Context

Starting in the 18th century with the consolidation of modern, capitalist market economies in the Western world and tied to the processes of industrialization and urbanization, work was increasingly performed outside the home, in factories and offices that were located in urban centers. The growth of a working middle class that emerged apart from traditional, largely agrarian ways of making a living brought about significant changes in the dynamics of social, cultural and gendered life for Europeans in the 19th century. At the same time, ideas of the Enlightenment and new knowledge emanating from the natural sciences sought to methodically find and formulate rational explanations of universal truth. Social reformers started to imagine the ideally functioning modern society that was based on, *inter alia*, definitions of masculinity and femininity. For the first time, experts negotiated and codified definitions of man and woman in literary texts, novels, reform and advice literature and encyclopedias. The well-known *Brockhaus* encyclopedia, for instance, defined women throughout the 19th century as nature’s true representatives of emotions and love with their primary roles being wives and mothers.³ In this endeavor to define and inscribe normative characteristics of the sexes into a cultural canon, discourses on expectations for men were also constructed. For middle-class men these included the acquisition of a respected profession (*Beruf*), wealth (*Besitz*) and education (*Bildung*). Simultaneous to, if not preceding, the

construction and propagation of images of the male citizen-soldier, work masculinity was essentially defined by the role of men using their education, wealth and profession to create, provide for and protect their families.\(^4\)

In 19\(^{th}\)-century Europe, work and social standing acquired mutually reinforcing meanings for men.\(^5\) Adhering to the cultural norms and ideals of the bourgeoisie, German-Jewish men as part of their acculturation and embourgeoisement came to identify themselves increasingly with their occupations and the status and respect that emanated from their professions.\(^6\) Jewish masculinity was unequivocally defined by gainful employment (\textit{Erwerbstätigkeit}), which in turn made men the heads (\textit{Oberhaupt}) of their families.\(^7\) A proper work ethic and concomitant pride in work that the German \textit{Bürgertum} assigned to men were essential principles to which children, and sons in particular, grew accustomed from early on in their lives. Children often revered their bourgeois fathers, according to Gunilla Budde, due to the respect their fathers enjoyed in society emanating from their professions and occupational achievements. Based on the principle of hard work and education, role model fathers – gentile and Jewish – lived the middle-class motto \textit{Arbeit}


macht das Leben süß (Work sweetens your life) that children were expected to internalize.\(^8\) Work, in short, could promise material rewards and masculine honor.\(^9\)

In the second half of the 19th century, for the majority of liberal Jews in Germany, religion no longer served as a sufficient basis for the definition of male gender roles and as a legitimizing factor for patriarchal rule. Gone were the days when Jewish masculinity was defined by Jewish men’s devotion to the study of the holy scriptures.\(^10\) This was a major change in traditional Jewish life because the task of income-making in premodern times had been equally if not more, relegated to Jewish women.\(^11\) In 19\(^{th}\)-century Central Europe, as Paula Hyman has argued, Jewish men increasingly obtained their sense of achievement outside of religion.\(^12\) “Men were to function in the public sphere, earning their family’s living and being active in the world.”\(^13\) By adopting a canon of middle-class values and norms of gentile society, German-Jewish men had come to internalize the aspirations of the gentile Bürgertum to improve themselves politically, culturally and economically. Seeking legal emancipation, German Jews hoped to adapt to bourgeois standards including the gendered division of labor and the concept of honorable work. As Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman have argued, in the 1920s and 1930s Jewish men and women lived in

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9 Stefanie Schüler-Springorum perceptively argued that the middle class defined itself through work and that Jewish men exhibited pride in their work accomplishments which equally, if not more, mattered to these men than their self-prescribed military masculinities. See Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, “A Soft Hero: Male Jewish Identity in Imperial Germany through the Autobiography of Aron Liebeck,” in *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History*, eds. Paul Lerner, Sharon Gillerman & Benjamin M. Baader (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).


11 Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 329. Marion Kaplan also asserted that “even in the 1890s, most German Jews had grandmothers or mothers who had been partners in family enterprises, or had supported their families themselves.” Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 52.


3. Jewish Men and Work

gender-specific worlds. As in most non-Jewish families, married men were responsible (though not always exclusively) for the economic provisioning for their families, while working-class and middle-class women, even if they had learned a trade or were supporting the family’s business, were primarily responsible for the home and the children.\textsuperscript{14} It was the prevailing bourgeois model that was carried over into the 1930’s.\textsuperscript{15}

In 1933, 61.3\% of German Jews worked in commerce and business (compared to 18.4\% of the total population in Germany), and 12.5 \% in public services and free professions (compared to 8.4\% of the total German population). Only 1.7\% and 1.4\% respectively were engaged in agriculture and domestic services (compared to 28.9\% and 3.9\%). A high proportion of Jewish university graduates were notaries and lawyers (16.2\%), doctors (10.8\%) and dentists (8.6\%). In the same year, 46\% of all working Jews were self-employed.\textsuperscript{16} By 1933, German Jews seemed to have realized many of the aspirations that had defined the Bürgertum in the 19th century. Due to their relative concentration in certain fields and independent professions, however, Jews had become a conspicuous target in antisemitic circles that saw especially in the Jewish professional unpleasant competition.\textsuperscript{17} Even before the Nazis took power in 1933, antisemitic discourses had started to depict “the Jew” as only engaged in dishonest commercial or intellectual work, to the detriment of the manually hard-working German man.

In 1933, the Nazis had not yet developed a clear blueprint for a European genocide targeting Europe’s Jews and other minorities. In their first steps to exclude Jews from German life, the state used antisemitic propaganda to aggressively disseminate depictions of Jews as anti-

\textsuperscript{16} Avraham Barkai, Vom Boykott zur Entjudung: Der wirtschaftliche Existenzkampf der Juden im Dritten Reich 1933-1943 (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1988), 12.
\textsuperscript{17} Richarz, Jewish Life in Germany, 13-15.
German, exploitative manipulators of an international capitalist system.\textsuperscript{18} In subsequent steps, the Nazi state implemented allegedly defensive measures by seeking to restrict and eliminate any Jewish economic presence in Germany. Ranging from economic anti-Jewish boycotts and the forceful dismissal of Jews from federal, state or municipal employment to legally undermining Jewish businesses with the intention to take over Jewish business ownership (a process referred to as “Aryanization”), the Nazis started to use multiple means in 1933 to rid the German economy of any possible Jewish influence. As Avraham Barkai has noted, this was a silent and gradual (\textit{schleichender}) process of economic expulsion (\textit{Verdrängung}) and expropriation. The Nazis had realized by the end of 1933 that even without public displays and loud demonstrations of antisemitism, Jews could be coerced into giving up their jobs, businesses and properties. If deemed necessary, clandestine threats, intimidation and minor acts of violence were acceptable.\textsuperscript{19} In the economic realm, the Jew had become an outcast.

Besides the alleged economic benefits that would follow the curtailment of a Jewish presence in the economy, however, the attempt to dislocate Jewish economic influence also served a gender-cultural function: the construction and elevation of the honorable “Aryan” male worker. Texts and images that discussed the concept of male-exclusive work (and manual labor in particular) carried connotations of pride, virtue, and honesty in \textit{völkisch} discourse. These texts depicted a self-sufficient German working man as not reliant on anyone’s charity, pity or reverence, unlike a poor beggar or wealthy aristocrat. In gendered discourses that were carried over into 1930s propaganda, the Nazis bestowed honor upon the “Aryan” working man and celebrated him as someone able to withstand the adversities of life – like a soldier – and who was


\textsuperscript{19} Barkai, \textit{Vom Boykott zur Entjudung}, 27 & 65.
capable of making a living for himself and his family. Indeed, next to “Aryan” soldierly masculinity, constructions of “Aryan” work masculinity demarcated by honest, hard labor in manufacturing and agriculture were praised. Not only did these men embody a sense of independence and achievement by fulfilling the gender norm of providing for themselves and their dependents, but they were also lauded for their active contributions towards making Germany an economically strong nation, in which the collective, the German Volk, could live in prosperity and harmony.

Translating ideology into social practice, the Nazis spared no efforts to propagandize their successes in eradicating mass unemployment, bringing back millions of jobs to the Aryan people. In contemporary sources and postwar memoirs, Germans linked their support of Hitler to his achievements in the economy. Sebastian Haffner claimed that among Hitler’s achievements, his
“economic miracle” outshone all.\textsuperscript{20} The mass support and popularity, particularly in the first half of the Third Reich, was partially a product of propaganda efforts. Yet historians and social scientists since 1945 have outlined in their studies on popular opinion how important the return of jobs, or at least the return of people’s hope for economic betterment, was. In his pioneering study based on interviews in the 1960s, William S. Allen recaptured ordinary Germans’ euphoria for Nazi economics: “What Northeimers could hardly believe possible had come to pass. There was not a single registered unemployed person in the town.” The only people who continued to receive welfare payments in the 1930s were widows, the elderly and the disabled.\textsuperscript{21} In their 1990s series of interviews, Eric A. Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband commonly encountered phrases like “Adolf basically got the unemployed off the streets,” “Hitler got rid of unemployment. Just about everybody had a job,” or:

Above all, it was the huge unemployment. I was also unemployed. Back then the unemployed would be standing from the steps of the labor office down to the street just to collect a couple of pfennigs… But afterward, once Hitler came to power, it was wonderful. Everybody had a job and there weren’t any more unemployed people. They were happy to have a job and the foodstuffs were cheaper and the wages were raised a bit.\textsuperscript{22}

It was in this context, a nation celebrating its revitalizing economy and the end of crisis associated with the Weimar Republic, that Jewish men, as the following discussion will show, must have felt particularly excluded and vulnerable to humiliation. In the Third Reich, the Nazis sought to deprive Jewish men of ways of identifying themselves with definitions of hegemonic masculinity that partially centered on the notion of economic independence and productivity. Work, in short, transcended the necessity to obtain material rewards needed to live; work had

become a cultural signifier for honor, respect and virtue, with gendered implications. It was for this reason that German-Jewish men were denied membership in the Reich Labor Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*), a six-month-long compulsory work service, introduced in 1935, that required German men, typically at the age of eighteen, to work in infrastructure projects. In addition to their exclusion from the prestigious *Wehrmacht*, the highest and most honorable institution for men to join, Jews were deemed not even worthy of digging trenches and building roads.

![Image of Reichsarbeitsdienst and Auschließungsschein passports](image)

**Fig. 20.** The Nazis created a special passport for the exclusion of Jews from the Reich Labor Service. The above example belonged to Erwin (Israel) Klotzsch, 1941.

### 2. A Gendered Struggle: Jewish Men and the Decline of Work Masculinity

While for non-Jews, economic standards were slowly improving, over the course of the 1930s German Jews increasingly suffered from unemployment, a steady decline in incomes, material destitution and poverty. Already in 1935/36, 83,000 Jews accepted aid by the Jewish Winter Relief Organization. In 1938, Jewish unemployment had reached over 80%. Of the employed, over 70% were considered self-employed but this included people who were simply

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living off their remaining assets or significantly reduced pensions.\textsuperscript{25} Thousands had become dependent on Jewish aid agencies.

Arguing for a gender role reversal, Marion Kaplan has demonstrated that women in the Third Reich increasingly took on leading roles, being the driving forces in their families, staying in charge of households, working outside their homes, and negotiating with government offices to make possible their family’s emigration:

We find early on women who expanded their traditional roles. We see anxious but highly energetic women taking note of the political and social environment and strategizing ways of responding. Many experimented the new behaviors rarely before attempted by any German women. Interceding for their men with the authorities, seeking paid employment for the first time, selling their home on their own and deciding on countries of refuge by themselves, often taking on male roles.\textsuperscript{26}

In her work, Kaplan finds women to have been more accommodating and adaptable and generally more amenable to changing their lives to fit the times.\textsuperscript{27} Citing a wealth of primary testimonies by Holocaust survivors, Nechama Tec similarly asserts that the Germans posed almost impossible challenges to the fulfillment of the role of the breadwinner. “When Jewish men found themselves unable to do what traditional society expected of them, they frequently became demoralized and depressed.”\textsuperscript{28} At another point, the author argues:

\textsuperscript{25} Barkai, \textit{Vom Boykott zur Entjudung}, 168. For primary sources see James Bachner, whose family had to move to a smaller apartment to save money. Willy Cohn started selling of furniture in 1938 to have some extra money. By 1941, together with his wife and children, he slept in only one room, a measure to save on the heating costs. Fritz Ottenheimer remembers how his family economically suffered as the only remaining income was his pension. James Bachner, \textit{My Darkest Years: Memoirs of a Survivor of Auschwitz, Warsaw and Dachau} (Jefferson: MacFarland Press, 2007); Willy Cohn, \textit{No Justice in Germany: The Breslau Diaries, 1933-1941}, ed. Nobert Conrads, transl. Kenneth Kronenberg (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012); Fritz Ottenheimer, \textit{Hineini – Here I am: Memoir}, LBINY MMII24.

\textsuperscript{26} Marion Kaplan, \textit{Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 30.

Men’s coping skills were... affected by their past habits. Men... could not fulfill the traditional roles of protector and provider. This inability to meet accepted male obligations often had an emotionally paralyzing effect.29

Historians have concluded that the decline and eventual loss of work had a profoundly debilitating and demoralizing effect on men and the ways they constructed their gender identities. In the following section, this argument will be scrutinized from a men’s studies perspective.

As indicated above, masculine identity was closely tied to the concept of work. As wage-earners, men ensured part of their masculine identity. When the means to make an income were challenged, some Jewish men also felt threatened in their male identities. In his memoirs, Herbert Löwy, who had worked devotedly as a nurse (Krankenpfleger), recalled when he got laid off in 1933: “Suicidal thoughts crossed through my mind. What was I supposed to do at home, if I was no longer allowed to be the provider for my family?”30 Max Krakauer (1888-1965) of Leipzig, owner of a movie business, was denied the mandatory membership in the Reich Chamber of Culture, which was required for him to work. He noted:

But I had to feed [ernähren] my family, and the question how to master this tortured me and many of my comrades who shared my fate [Schicksalsgenossen] day and night. Whatever I tried, and I tried everything possible, failed due to the systematic agitation [Hetze] against us. The disappointments and losses were countless. Soon, I had to downsize our apartment.31

The department store owner in Hanau, Carl Schwabe (1891-1967), remembered how excruciating a time it was for him when his business declined. With too many commitments and too many bills to pay, he recalled that “I was suffering terribly.”32 Gad Beck (1923-2012) also recalled in his postwar memoir that the family's financial problems took a major turn for the worse in 1935: “My

29 Ibid., 51.
31 Max & Karoline Krakauer, Lichter im Dunkeln. Flucht und Rettung eines jüdischen Ehepaars im Dritten Reich (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1994), 16.
father, who was going on fifty, was still slaving away with his wholesale tobacco business so his two children could go to the college-track secondary school.” Beck also recalled how “my father started feeling the effects in his business relations, but he never spoke to us about it.” Eventually, Beck’s father was no longer able to pay for his son’s schooling. After he had lost his business and the family had to move to a smaller, more affordable place, Beck’s father became “absolutely devastated.” He barricaded himself in for days. “He felt like a failure.”

In all of these cases, Jewish men’s loss of employment or reduction of income from their established vocations led to an economic deterioration within German Jewish households. It was not only the loss of material conditions of life, however, that was at stake. As John Tosh has rightly argued, “masculinity is inherently insecure because – among other factors – its social recognition depends on material accomplishments.” In the Third Reich, German Jewish men faced major economic struggles to maintain the material lifestyles that they and their families had been accustomed to. Not being able to maintain such levels meant a palpable increase in existential concerns and fears. However, Jewish men’s concerns caused by the loss of work gained a deeper meaning, transcending the fear of losing one’s standards of living. It was not only the economic plight and a reduction in standards of living that Jews might have been able to adapt to and that weighed on Jewish men. Instead, as the above excerpts show, Jewish men were tormented by the inability to uphold their masculine identities which had signified much respect and authority within the family and in public. In his memoir, Krakauer spoke of countless disappointments and losses. Beck’s father perceived himself a failure. Löwy considered suicide.

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Strikingly, the authors did not lament the decline in material conditions, the loss of money or the painful increase in hunger or relative poverty that might have resulted from an acute shortage of financial resources. Löwy did not contemplate suicide due to a possible material deterioration to starvation levels, but rather due to his emotional desperation and perceived loss of face as head of the household. These authors palpably feared an erosion of their power within a system of gender relations in which they held key positions. As sole breadwinners, these men had become authorities and now they experienced major disruptions in lives that had been significantly governed by gender relations.

Hilde Sonnet-Sichel remembered her husband’s work-related debilitation:

The desperate feeling of being an outcast [ausgestossen zu sein] distressed him. He was unable to sleep at night. He stopped eating because – as he said – no one has the right to eat if he does not work. He eventually became so despondent that he slid into a major depression. He feared that we would all starve to death…. He turned skinny and scraggy with deep furrows in his face. His entire self-confidence was gone. In the past, he always had such a friendly smile and a good word for everyone. Now he is changed… [he] does not see anyone anymore.35

Honnet-Sichel’s memories about her husband, a lawyer, underline that it was not the reduction in standards of living that led to an emasculation of Jewish men. Her husband had enough to eat, but he refused to do so because it was the perceived attack on his gender identity that he was unable to cope with. As men were supposed to be working, self-sufficient and independent from others, Honnet-Sichel’s husband, and the other examples above, understood themselves to have fundamentally failed in their gender roles as breadwinners and providers.

Other texts explicitly relate to men’s pain of being unemployed. With no work, some felt a lack of purpose. With no income and no sense of being productive and useful, Jewish men’s identities changed. The Hamburg lawyer Kurt Rosenberg (1900-1977) noted in his diary in 1936:

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My work life is disquieting [unruhevoll]. Since June 30, I am no longer allowed to give legal advice… I was finally barred [ausgestoßen] from my arduously built and much-loved work. Even free-of-charge advice was outlawed. I felt the emptiness of the space I was pushed into.\(^{36}\)

Following the realization that living in Germany based on the customs, habits, practices and expectations to which German Jewish men and women had been accustomed was no longer possible, some Jewish men – more so than women – slid into the passive, docile and desolate behaviors and depression that Tec has referred to. Already in 1933, Kurt Rosenberg had noted in his diary:

It has gotten very quiet in my office. There is too much to think about. Plans appear in my mind, vague and uncontrolled. There is no room for distractions… You are tired and exhausted [müße]. You are looking for peace. You are avoiding people with similar fates [Schicksalsgenossen] who always want to unload their concerns and pessimism. You wait but don’t know what you are waiting for. You almost hope fate will force you to make a decision.\(^{37}\)

Zvi Aviram (formerly Heinz Abrahamson, born in 1927) recalled how deeply shaken his father was the day after the anti-Jewish boycotts of April 1, 1933; he became so depressed and fearful that he had to stop working as a shoemaker, falling into a passive state. Eventually, it was his mother who had to sell the business and provide for the family herself. His father turned into an unemployed, broken man. In retrospect, Aviram confessed how he disapproved of his father’s psychological withdrawal, leaving all the responsibility to his mother.\(^{38}\) Yet what was likely hard for a teenaged boy to discern at the time was that Aviram’s father was not simply hit hard financially by the boycott of his business. Being unable to provide for his family went much deeper and had serious repercussions on his identity and self-understanding as a man. From being in


\(^{37}\) Ibid., Entry August 31, 1933.

control and actively supporting the family, Aviram’s father became a different person, a man of passivity and lack of initiative. Similarly, Inge Deutschkron remembered how her father, after becoming unemployed, hanging around with other men who were in similar situations, playing cards all day long.39

Aviram’s excerpt is also insightful as it was written by a son who remembered the change in his father. Like Honnet-Sichel, Aviram was an observer of the emasculation of Jewish men in the Third Reich. As gender identities are in constant flux, in a process of being negotiated and contested, it is crucial to realize that Jewish wives and children observing their husbands’ and fathers’ changes indirectly contributed to the emasculation of some Jewish men.40 Only in social relationships, within the family and society, did men’s new roles and identities gain relational meaning, as Kaplan – in her analysis of Jewish women stepping up and taking active control of work in and outside of home – has shown. Jewish women’s and even children’s increased work responsibilities in response to men’s disappearance in the work force underlines this.41

40 Hans Winterfeldt (b. 1926) remembered that when his father’s textile store in the provincial town of Lippehne in Brandenburg was gradually declining, once his father started to worry, and he remembered how he too was worried as a ten-year-old. Marie Jalowicz (1922-1998) remembered her father’s desperation during the war: “Again and again, I tried to tell him that I did not care for this.” Coming home from forced labor, Marie would find her father isolated and lonely (vereinsamt). Erna Segal remembered how her husband, the owner of several apartments in Berlin, started to suffer tremendously when his tenants suddenly began to demand reductions in their rent and eventually stopped paying rent altogether. Unable to pay their own mortgages and unable to get loans from any bank, the Segals had to start selling the apartments from which they had generated their livelihood. “My husband was desperate. He never thought something like this to be possible.” Hertha Nathorff felt equal pity for her husband, a physician, after he got laid off in 1933. In her diary, she noted: “How deeply he is missing his work in the hospital. It hurts me more than my own loss.” As these excerpts show, the decline in business incomes and social respect was not an exclusively male affair. Jewish women and children experienced, witnessed and recorded this painful process, frequently expressing pity for their husbands and fathers respectively. See Hans Winterfeldt, “Oral Interview,” 1997 Shoah Foundation, University of Southern California, Audio Tape; Hans Winterfeldt in Sie durften nicht mehr Deutsche sein. Jüdischer Alltag in Selbstzeugnissen, 1933-1938, eds. Margarete Limberg & Hubert Rübsaat (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1990), 214; Marie Jalowicz Simon, Untergetaucht. Eine junge Frau überlebt in Berlin, 1940-1945, ed. Irene Statenwerth & Hermann Simon (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2014); Erna Segal, You shall never forget, LBINY ME594 MM69, 71; Hertha Nathorff, Das Tagebuch der Hertha Nathorff, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1987), 47.
41 In 1937, Das Israelitische Familienblatt registered three times as many job positions for women than for men. See Schüler-Springorum, Geschlecht und Differenz, 114. Memoirs of children also vividly recall how they had to either help out and participate in the family businesses, such as Rudolf Rosenberg, son of a tobacconist, or find employment outside the home to support their families. Ingeborg Hecht (1921-2011) worked as a babysitter; Lothar Orbach (b.
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While Jewish economic victimization was certainly not exclusive to Jewish men, it was men who came to experience the pressure of conformity to be the breadwinners. Such pressures could lead to desolate, depressive behaviors or even to more extreme ends. Driven by aggravating economic despair, a considerable number of Jewish men resorted to suicide in the 1930s. Konrad Kwiet and Helmut Eschwege in their 1984 pioneering study on Jewish resistance, and more recently Susanne Fischer and Christian Göschel, have analyzed suicide among German Jews in Nazi Germany. They have plausibly demonstrated that most suicides occurred prior to the arrival of deportation orders in the early 1940s. Commonly, elderly and predominantly female Jews ended their lives since more elderly Jewish women were left by the time the Nazis started to deport German Jews in late 1941. However, Jewish suicides began in 1933, albeit in lesser numbers, and during the course of the 1930s, many Jewish men committed suicide in cases that were directly related to the perceived degradation and emasculation in their work lives. When middle-class and assimilated German Jews saw themselves economically threatened, their business vandalized and boycotted and civil servants being dismissed, the result was an estimated 300 to 400 suicides for April and May 1933 alone.  

Christian Göschel asserts that the events of 1933 and the aggressive push towards “Aryanizing” Jewish businesses, the growing financial problems within Jewish families, and the perceived humiliations of many Jews who had considered themselves patriotic Germans led to

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42 Konrad Kwiet & Hermann Eschwege, Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand. Deutsche Juden in Kampf um Existenz und Menschenwürde, 2nd ed. (Hamburg: Christians Verlag, 1986), 198. The authors further claim that orthodox Jews far less often resorted to suicide. This supports my point of middle-class Jewish men relating to their professions and the status and prestige they associated with their work. Both were fundamental elements of their world-views and identities. For orthodox men, in contrast, religion provided more orientation and meaning in their lives, likely helping them to better process their economic losses.
hundreds of suicides amongst German Jews in the prewar years. The loss of military masculinity (see Chapter 1) and even indictments based on sexual transgression (see Chapter 2) led to some Jewish men ending their lives. But it was predominantly socio-economic fears that led Jewish men to end their lives prematurely. The judge Dr. Hans Bettmann after being dismissed from court and Professor Jacobsohn of Marburg after being discharged from teaching both ended their lives.\textsuperscript{43} The example of Moritz Sachs is particularly striking. Born in 1873, he had worked for a Berlin brewery for more than forty years and was even a member of the board of directors. In 1933, he was immediately dismissed but able to procure a significant annual pension of 7200 Marks which allowed him to provide for his family. Eventually, however, the pension was reduced and after 1938 entirely discontinued. In the end, he was entirely dependent on the generous support from his two former secretaries, an unbearable degradation. He ended his life in 1940.\textsuperscript{44}

German Jews who ended their lives prematurely had multiple reasons for doing so. Jewish men’s degradation from work, however, comprised an important factor, particularly in the early years of the Third Reich. The material deterioration for many middle and upper-classes Jewish men, I argue, does not sufficiently explain the decision to commit suicide. Instead, for men who had accumulated considerable economic, social and cultural capital though the professions, their perceived loss of social standing was so emasculating that some decided to end their lives. Intersecting with gender, emasculation was intricately tied to concepts of class and age. Former professors, judges, lawyers and other upper civil servants and businessmen who had devoted many years of their lives to their country’s service (and who were often war veterans) perceived their humiliation as too painful to act otherwise.

\textsuperscript{43} Christian Göschel, \textit{Suicide in Nazi Germany} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 96.

\textsuperscript{44} Anna Fischer, \textit{Erzwungener Freitod, Spuren und Zeugnisse in den Freitod getriebener Juden der Jahre 1938-1945 in Berlin} (Berlin: Textverlag, 2007), 65.
3. Accepting the Challenge: Jewish Men and the Preservation of Work Masculinity

Contrary to the hypothesis of a widespread Jewish emasculation, however, considerable evidence points to Jewish men’s gradual adaptation to the economic restrictions imposed by the Nazis and their continued strong will to undertake the challenge not only to provide for the material needs of their families, but equally important, to preserve their gendered identities as men. In the following three sections, I will demonstrate how Jewish men struggled yet persevered in their double-edged endeavors by a) managing to remain in their accustomed professions, b) discovering alternative ways and niches to make an income, and c) even finding surprising meaning in forced labor.

a) Jewish Men in Their Accustomed Professions

People write memoirs, diaries and letters to record what they find noteworthy. Typically, such content revolves around special events in one’s life or in society in general. They represent cognitive ruptures in their lives, in a positive or negative sense, such as the election of Hitler in January 1933 that most memoirs refer to in some detail, or more personal issues, such as a death in the family. Continuities, on the other hand, are less frequently reflected on and recorded by authors in diaries and memoirs. Consequently, there is a relative lack of commentary in memoirs pertaining to the continued, uninterrupted socio-economic life of many German Jews between 1933 and 1938. Instead, such sources often start with a radical moment in the author’s and his or her family’s lives, such as Kristallnacht in November 1938. The preceding years are often either not discussed or abbreviated into a few paragraphs. The loss of employment and the ensuing sudden confrontation with existential insecurities and concerns for their future were cases of such major disjunctions from their previous lives.
Yet, in 1933, for many Jewish families life continued relatively uninterrupted for the time being, despite the heightened prevalence of antisemitism in the press and media. Many Jews could remain in their professions. As mentioned above, almost half of Germany’s Jews in employment in 1933 were self-employed and thus did not have to face dismissals. In their attempts to convince Germans to boycott Jewish businesses, the Nazis were also not (yet) widely successful. Though most Germans did begin to sever their social relations, if they had any, with Jewish friends and neighbors, this was a gradual process. For years, many German Jews felt they could adapt to the new and presumably not permanent conditions of Nazi Germany and maintain sufficient means to provide an income. For the historian, therefore, it is essential to comprehend some of the subtler yet important continuities that might not be addressed in the primary sources.

The neurologist Dr. Hermann Pineas (b. 1892) recalled that he was excluded from the chamber of German health care providers (Krankenkassen), a membership that was required if he wanted to continue practicing as a physician. His exclusion, however, happened in 1937, more than four years after the Nazis had come to power. It was the first time he had experienced work-related discrimination.45 Up to that time, due to his war veteran privileges, his work life had remained relatively uninterrupted. In another example of “delayed” work-related discrimination, Wilhelm Buchheim (1887-1957), the principal of the Jewish Gymnasium in Dortmund, relayed a sense of normality in his diary. The only change in his job worth mentioning was that he and his Jewish colleagues had to swear an oath to the “crazy criminal Hitler.” Other than that, he pursued his job with as much passion and devotion as ever prior to his dismissal in November 1938. He and his wife left Germany in 1939.46 The real estate agent Joseph Adler (b. 1895) wrote in his 1939 memoir: “The political events, the brutal and cruel treatments from the Nazis did not touch us

45 Hermann Pineas, Memoirs, LBINY ME502 MM4 MM61, 5.
46 Wilhelm Buchheim, Diaries, LBINY ME1535 Folder 4, p. 9
personally until Kristallnacht... We always found a way to keep the office busy and the children in school.”

He further noted:

In Germany, as a front soldier, I still had certain privileges. The children were in school, I had work and we thought we could squeeze through. I had the Iron Cross and the Front Fighter Orden [sic.] (a war medal) from Hitler’s government. In this regard, we were a little bit better off than the other Jews.

For people like Pineas, Buchheim and Adler, life seemingly continued on a normal, uninterrupted path well into the mid/late-1930s that featured sustained and meaningful employment and a secure income.

For most German Jews, however, economic conditions took a turn for the worse after 1933, dominated by fears and anxieties related to maintaining a level of subsistence. Hermann Badt (1887-1957), the first Jewish assessor in the state of Prussia and later a government minister, received a generic letter from the government on July 5, 1933, applying the new civil service law that was designed to remove Jews and the politically unwanted from government work. The letter required him to submit documentary proof of employment prior to 1914 or of participation in military combat during World War I. Such letters were sent to all civil servants, Jewish and non-Jewish, as a step to identify Jewish employees who were not war veterans. If the exemptions did not apply to the individual employee, he was required to submit proof of his grandparents’ “Aryan” ancestry; in the case of a Jewish background, an employee would be dismissed. Badt had to submit all necessary paperwork within three weeks.

The Berlin-based teacher Fritz Friedländer (b. 1901) was given even less time – three days – to respond to a similar request.

48 Ibid., 51.
A similarly sudden intrusion into his life faced Erich Seligmann (1880-1954), the founder of the Jewish hospital in Berlin. He was denounced at work in 1933 for having made comments of an unpatriotic nature, and thus he was let go based on the civil service law’s stipulation that permitted the dismissal of “untrustworthy” employees.\textsuperscript{51} In several desperate letters sent to the municipal office in Berlin, Seligmann tirelessly expressed how the denunciations had hurt him. He listed all his merits and accomplishments as a scholar, physician and veteran of World War I. In a letter addressed to the city on August 30, 1933, he articulated his sense of national belonging, referring to his impeccable record of thirty years of service for the country, and his persistent refusal to engage in politics. He had always “felt national” during times of peace and war and had always done his duty with great devotion. In his growing desperation in ever more letters sent over the course of 1933, Seligmann increasingly relied on the honors he had accumulated over the years. At one point, he referred to a badge he had received for participating in a militia whose task it had been to maintain law and order in Berlin in the chaotic months following the end of the war in 1918 (the Abzeichen der Einwohnerwehr), and alluded to how he had fought Bolshevist-communist forces. A congratulatory birthday note from the mayor of Berlin was also part of his efforts to protest his impending dismissal.\textsuperscript{52}

In the cases described above, it becomes evident that Jewish men struggled to sustain their forms of employment that were so central to their men’s gendered identities. The state acted relentlessly and systematically in getting rid of Jewish employees who did not qualify for an exemption. However, a finer reading of these sources also reveals that Jewish men did not simply

\textsuperscript{51} The Civil Service Law not only ousted Jewish employees – based on their grandparents’ religious affiliations – reasoning that Jews cannot be trusted as working for the German government. The Nazis also aimed to dismiss people who harbored allegedly unpatriotic and hostile anti-German sentiments and ideologies, particularly civil servants who were members of leftist political parties and party organizations such as the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Communist Party (KPD).

\textsuperscript{52} Erich Seligmann, \textit{Letters}, LBYNY, AR4104, Box 1.
give in and crumble to Nazi pressure. Far from passively despairing over what their futures might hold, Jewish men passionately fought to remain in their positions for which they had striven for years. Adolf Asch’s case exemplifies this. Though he was fired as a lawyer in early 1933, six weeks later the war veteran was successfully reinstated. 53

Trying to benefit from war veteran privileges, many Jewish men consciously coupled their masculine work identities to their military masculinity. Jewish men made use of military masculinity not only to defend their sense of male honor and to exhibit steadfastness as men who had fought in battle, but also to preserve another gender marker: their jobs. Strikingly, even a renowned physician like Seligmann, who had published numerous articles and books and who was a recognized medical expert in his field and beyond, felt the need to resort to means of military masculinity to defend his position defined by work. Military and bourgeois masculinities were mutually reinforcing and often simultaneously employed in specific contexts. Similar to Till van Rahden's concept of a “situational ethnicity,”54 Jewish men and women modulated their gender identities in situational contexts. As instances of situational gender identities, military and bourgeois masculinity could overlap and be utilized in specific situations when statements about one’s military service or work accomplishments seemed appropriate or even warranted. As war veterans, Seligmann and others claimed they had proven themselves as faithful, patriotic Germans and thus deserved to stay in their accustomed employment.

The case of the lawyer Ludwig Bendix (1877-1954) is particularly illuminating. He was arrested in 1933 for having taken on a client prior 1933 who allegedly had been a communist. Upon his release from jail several months later, Bendix, a war veteran, still categorically refused

53 Adolf Asch, Memoiren, LBINY ME18 MM3, 2.
54 Situational ethnicity refers to an ethnic identity such as Jewishness that can be either displayed or concealed depending on its usefulness in a given situation. See Till van Rahden, Jews and Other Germans: Civil Society, Religious Diversity and Urban Politics in Breslau, 1860-1925 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).
to give emigration a serious thought, according to his son Reinhard, and immediately set about to return to his established profession, making a living as a legal counselor (*Rechtsberater*). In a letter to his son, Bendix justified his zeal for work:

> Disappointments and intimidations did not get me down… I fought every inch of ground. I did not want to let myself be uprooted. My efforts to regain the basis of my professional existence inevitably meant an affirmative attitude toward the country despite the discriminatory measures of those in power."55

Upon his release, Bendix commissioned an announcement in the newspaper in which he proffered his services as a legal counselor (*Rechtsberater*), a new title that the Nazis imposed on former Jewish lawyers who were allowed to counsel Jewish clients only. Fighting against being uprooted and not frightened by further disappointments, Bendix hardly appeared emasculated. To the contrary, though no longer a lawyer, he used all available means to stay in his accustomed profession, using this to make a living but, equally important, to uphold his gender identity. “To have acted otherwise,” his son reported, “would have meant to my father that he willingly repudiated his entire career.”56

Bendix’s efforts as a legal counselor soon attracted attention from his gentile competitors. Again denounced, he was notified to appear before the police in the northern district of Berlin, where he was confronted with the circular he had distributed. The Berlin Bar Association had initiated criminal proceedings against him, accusing the counselor of unfair competition. Though Ludwig was acquitted, witnessing his father’s struggle as a lawyer under the Nazis was a major formative experience of Reinhard’s youth: “We had no way of comprehending how utterly devastated my father felt at this destruction of his world.” Fending off the looming loss of job and a subsequent erosion of their gender identity, even when successful at first sight, was no easy

56 Ibid., 122.
undertaking for Jewish men who, however, as the Bendix case proves, often did take up the fight and were successful in finding temporary reprieve. For former civil servants such as Bendix, remaining in their accustomed profession ensured economic subsistence. But it was also a matter of pride and dignity. Jewish men’s work was an essential part of their identities.

Jewish men’s struggle to maintain their jobs and provide for their families also affected family life and the people involved as part of the family structure. It could even impact the architecture of social living itself with the possible re-arrangement of living quarters. Hans Hermann Kuttner recalled that when his father, a practicing dentist, was forced to give up his office in the summer of 1938, his father moved the office home. “I had to move out of my room, the children’s room [Kinderzimmer] so my father could have his doctor’s office [Praxis] in the apartment.”57 Palpably, Jewish men’s desperate attempts to sustain their professions and to make a living could have direct spatial implications for the rest of their families when living quarters became compressed and living and working spaces started to compete in the domestic sphere. Kuttner remembered that soon after his father’s move, the patients stopped coming. Yet Kuttner’s reaction is symptomatic of how Jewish men reacted to their impeding loss of employment. While it was an economic struggle to make a living, Jewish men like Kuttner chose to find ways to keep in their previous professions as a way of maintaining their accustomed lives and their identities. Looking for alternative work or acquiring new professional skills was for Kuttner, Seligmann and all others examined above not (yet) an option.

57 Hans Hermann Kuttner, Interview Transcript, Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, 2.
b) Accepting the Challenge: Jewish men probing new job prospects

Over the course of several years, privileges that allowed Jewish civil servants to remain employed if they had fought in World War I or had been employed prior to 1914 were revoked. Jewish businessmen also faced increased pressure to liquidate or transfer their businesses. Contemplating new and different means of employment became, therefore, an increasingly pressing issue for many Jewish men. As Fritz Friedländer (1901-1980), a left-wing journalist and teacher, blithely claimed, one had to get over (drüber hinwegkommen) all the antisemitic tirades in the press: “Well, one had to adapt to the new situation. Were the former Jewish lawyers and physicians not able to find employment in industry and commerce? With a strong will, one could do it.”

Equally defiant, the lawyer Kurt Rosenberg (1900-1977) expressed fervor for action to his diary in April 1933:

The work of eight years of hard labor is trampled down. We [my partners and I] had to let go of our nine employees. We are in the midst of liquidating our lives’ work, and are full of bitterness and helpless anger (hilfloser Zorn). But I am not helpless and I will make sure that the emotional foundation (seelisches Fundament) of my family will not get shattered, not making them subject to demoralization. I am full of energy to work (Tatkraft) and have accepted the fight over my fate.

Though both examples remain vague in terms of how German Jews were actually supposed to circumvent the increasing economic restrictions that were imposed on them, it is striking that they nevertheless communicate an optimistic sense of eagerness for work.

Jewish men took matters into their hands, not lacking initiative to find work. Konrad Latte (1922-2005) vividly recalled how his father, the owner of a textile store, fought to make an existence for his family. After his father had been pushed out by his former business partners in the mid-1930s, “my father desperately tried to keep our family above water. As an itinerant

58 Fritz Friedländer, Memoiren, LBINY ME 760, Box 2, Folder 2, p. 170. Trans. S. Huebel.
59 Rosenberg, Tagebücher, Diary Entry April 25, 1933. Trans. S. Huebel.
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salesman with heavy bags of merchandise, he wandered through the city of Breslau, coming home at night completely exhausted."\(^{60}\) In his memoir, Hans Rosenthal (1925-1987) recounted his father’s struggle. As a senior associate for a bank, his father first faced demotion at work in 1935 and was finally let go in 1937. Rosenthal’s father then tried to build a new existence from scratch, purchased a car and hoped to make a living by soliciting merchandise in the outer districts of Berlin. This did not bring any improvement, however. The discrimination had eroded his father’s “feeble composure and aggravated his health. He suffered tremendously by this defamation.” A few months later, his father died.\(^{61}\)

Unlike the two examples with an optimistic tone, Latte’s and Rosenthal’s observations of their fathers seem more grim. Both men had desperately tried to provide for their families by adapting to the challenge. Seeking alternative forms of employment as salesmen, both men, as their children remember, suffered tremendously, trying to secure an economic existence. Clearly, men’s adjustment with their limited financial means to start a new line of work and with adverse prospects to succeed with their businesses in a hostile country, “getting over” their perilous situations was not as easy as Friedländer suggested in his memoir. However, Latte’s and Rosenthal’s memories can be also read as manifestos of a middle-class Jewish work ethic and a commitment to conform to the masculine role of being the breadwinner. Both fathers are portrayed as men who struggled to retain considerable agency over their and their families’ lives, making it possible for them to survive, even if only provisionally.

While many Jewish men struggled to even get by, others resorted to illegal measures to make ends meet. Alfred Meyer (b. 1920) recollected that his father, only very late and with utmost

\(^{60}\) Konrad Latte, *Und wenn wir nur eine Stunde gewinnen... Wie ein jüdischer Musiker die Nazijahre überlebte*, ed. Peter Schneider (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2001), 26.

reluctance, was ready to relocate a tiny part of his assets abroad, in violation of the law, for them
to be spared from government taxation and confiscation. His father had been a notary, a Prussian
official, and had “sworn an oath to regard the law as holy, [but in] later years, this seemingly safe
nest egg was to grow by more than a few hundred marks.” With the assets safely abroad, Alfred
was able to leave Germany later on. A further concession to illegality by his father was to “get
paid under the table for his services as attorney since registered earnings were taxed too heavily.
That was called black money.”

While Meyer’s story is tragic, as both his father and mother perished in the Holocaust, it is
also illustrative as it demonstrates how Jewish men tried through all available, even illegal, means
to provide for their families and to ensure an economic survival and existence for their dependents.
Meyer’s father certainly could not have foreseen the coming implementation of the Nazis’
murderous intentions. His priority was, based on the social custom and the gendered role expected
of men, to provide for his children and wife.

Erich Bloch recounted that as a graphic artist in the advertising industry his license was
revoked, but that in order to make a living, he too continued with his work illegally. Ernst Sachs
(b. 1888) reminisced that after his business was “Aryanized” in late 1938, he continued working
illegally cleaning windows. The teacher Hans Schwarz illegally instructed students in English.
Clearly, the pressure of making an income for oneself and their dependents made some Jewish
men cross moral and legal boundaries, resorting to illicit means as the last resort to generate the
necessary funds needed for life. Exerting such kind of conduct might start in 1933 but intensified

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62 Alfred Meyer, *My Attitudes towards Germany*, LBINY AR 25075 Box 1, Folder 1, p. 3
by the end of the decade and more so after the war began when Nazi economic restrictions became even more severe.

In their final attempts to retain dignity, some Jewish businessmen who realized they could no longer continue with their enterprises preferred to liquidate their businesses on their own terms before being forced to have their businesses “Aryanized.”66 Fritz Pagel (b. 1895) dissolved his business in 1939, after which he lived off his savings.67 Hertha Nathorff’s father in April 1939 was vehemently against selling the old family business that had been within the family for generations. Instead, it was to be deleted from the trade register.68 This symbolized a more honorable departure from their work-lives than the perceived theft of their businesses by the Nazis. Selling or keeping a business, trying to continue making an income the way these men were accustomed to and defending their lifetime achievements, the businesses they had built over many years and taken pride in were major concerns of discussion. A “choiceless choice,” giving up a lifetime’s work was no simple matter.

By 1933, most German Jews started contemplating emigration from Germany. Jews’ adherence to the men’s provider role was tightly interwoven with the ever-more pressing question of emigration. But as I argued in Chapter 1, Jewish war veterans defended their military masculine identities and as part of this reaction for a long time rejected emigrating from the country for which they had patriotically fought and risked their lives. As I also suggested, military masculinity was linked to work masculinity in the sense that Jewish men tried to preserve both and utilize both in order to perpetuate their masculine identities. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that many Jewish men in the first half of the Third Reich often refused to consider their family’s emigration.

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66 In 1932 more than 50,000 Jewish businesses had been registered in Germany; by July 1938, fewer than 9000 remained. In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, even these businesses were liquidated. Kaplan, Dignity and Despair, 24.
68 Nathorff, Tagebuch, 156.
What contributed to men’s reluctance to leave Germany was the fact that the bourgeois professions of civil servant, lawyer, notary, and teacher were not in demand or unsuitable in countries of South and North America or Palestine. As Marion Kaplan has shown, women were at first more accepting and open to the idea of changing their occupations and working in perhaps less reputable professions abroad than Jewish men who found it degradingly below their honor to switch to more manual and physically labor-intensive jobs. According to Kaplan:

[because of] men’s close identification with their occupations, they often felt trapped into staying. Women were familiar with the kinds of work, generally domestic…. Women seemed less status-conscious than men… women did not experience perhaps the descent as intensely as men…Men and women led relatively distinct lives and often interpreted daily events differently.69

Hilde Honnet-Sichel, whose husband had refused to eat due to the shame he felt as an unemployed man, was not open to considering the option of emigration and finding employment abroad. “One of the main reasons my husband did not want to emigrate was his job.”70 Somewhat condemningly, the physician Martin Gumpert (1897-1955) concluded in his 1950 autobiography that he had seen Jews knowingly run into the gas chambers because many could not overcome the prospect of giving up their work accomplishments:

His mind is destroyed when he has to give up what he has accumulated over a lifetime of toil or even has gathered over generations of ancestors, the background of his prestige and his social standings.71

Gumpert juxtaposed, with some hindsight, his decision to leave Germany in 1933, following his ad hoc dismissal, with other Jews’ reluctance. Gumpert interpreted this unwillingness by many German Jews to emigrate as being intricately connected to men’s material and social achievements based on their professions. As the historian Judith Gerson remarks:

71 Martin Gumpert, Autobiography, LBINY ME223 MM31, 216.
[t]he younger generation of Jewish men had not built up their hopes yet, developed
honorable reputation and accumulated resources, all of which their fathers, uncles
and grandfathers had secured through years of hard work and military service,
offering ostensible protections to their elders and making it harder to leave.\textsuperscript{72}

Yet, more Jewish men than women did emigrate from Germany. The construction of
masculinity, as I have argued before, varied greatly, depending on time and space and the
individual itself, and to some Jewish men, military masculinity and their previous jobs did not
constitute an insurmountable hurdle, particularly if the type of employment had not reciprocated
significant social status and prestige (e.g. in blue-collar occupations). For men, going abroad,
therefore, willfully or coerced, was almost always tied to the concepts of gender and class. For
Jewish men, keeping their masculine identities as providers was imperative. In a letter sent from
Berlin in July 1940 to his son Bernhard (b. 1914) who already had found his way to Shanghai,
Gerschon Leib Frum (1879-1943) asked his son for an affidavit from Shanghai and made
unequivocal statements of how he still intended to work once he and his wife had arrived there.
He would be no burden to anyone.\textsuperscript{73} Evidently, the sixty-one-year-old Gerschon felt physically
agile enough for a new start in Asia, willing to do any kind of work.

Some contemplated registering for retraining programs that Jewish organizations offered
as steps to prepare and enhance their chances for emigration. The sixty-year-old businessman Salo
Rosenthal (1879-1945) had accepted a retraining option in Berlin, and prior to his emigration
agreed to learn the profession of tailoring with the hope of building a new existence in South
America. His credential (\textit{Zeugnis}) from his apprenticeship read in May 1939:

\begin{quote}
Mr. Salo Rosenthal... learned in my house the tailoring of men’s and women’s
apparel as well as stitching. Mr. Rosenthal has excelled through a high degree of
motivation (\textit{Eigeninteresse}) as well as his already existing skills and industrious
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{73} Frum Family, “Letter July 8, 1940,” USHMM, Microfiche RG10.152
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demeanor. I can warmly recommend him as a committed and useful cutter (Zuschneider). Mr. Rosenthal is capable of taking over any leading position. For his future, I wish him the best. B. Nathan.74

Interestingly, however, the options of starting an expedited apprenticeship program attracted slightly more female than male applications. This gender imbalance, however, does not necessarily lead to a conclusion of gender role reversal that postulates that women were more prone to take on the challenges that the Nazis imposed on them while Jewish men remained inactive and potentially despondent. Rather, it suggests that many Jewish men, especially if older and well established in formerly higher-paying professions, were reluctant to move down on the ladder of work-related reputation and status. As Kaplan has shown, in 1933-34, of those seeking retraining, 51% of women and only 26% of men were over the age of thirty.75 As most training programs focused on manual labor (farming, cooking, sewing), for the upper-class Jewish men retraining was not an appealing option. For the time being, many preferred other options within Germany or hoped to establish themselves again in their preferred profession in another country once they received their visas to leave.

In the meantime, however, there is considerable evidence that points to Jewish men remaining employed or engaged with work at home, even if such work was of a more intellectual nature. It was yet another way of maintaining masculine identity. Willy Cohn, teacher in Breslau, found some relief in an article he had published in the Hamburger Familienblatt after his dismissal in 1933. It was “something very important to me,” despite his growing financial concerns.76 Writing an article on regional culture constituted a coping mechanism to maintain self-worth and honor. To Cohn, it resembled meaningful, self-defined work even if it resulted in no material

75 Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 30.
76 Cohn, Breslau Diaries, 23.
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rewards. As late as May 1941, he felt relief finding refuge in his self-directed, intellectual work: “Yesterday morning I spent almost four happy hours dictating my memoirs… when I am able to work, I forget everything that depresses me.” At the end of September of 1941, and only weeks prior to his and his family's deportation, he found more self-acknowledgment when he wrote: “I had such a sense of happiness yesterday at having completed my work.” For Cohn, “having work to do” was a means to an end. It ensured a somewhat normal life with his gender identity as a working man partially intact.

When he was cut off from society, no longer allowed to borrow books from the public library, the former professor Victor Klemperer continued with his professional calling as a scholar. His work ethic could not be shattered. Klemperer’s clinging to his work in fact helped him to overcome some of the hardships the Nazis had caused. Maintaining an imagined presence in the world of academia as a scholar, Klemperer did not perceive himself as a nobody: “I have proven to myself once again that I can still produce. And once again I solemnly swear to myself to continue working in the face of every challenge.”

Writing scholarly books in his field of expertise, essays and his diary and already conceptualizing a postwar scholarly monograph on the language of the Third Reich (which he subsequently published under the title *Lingua Tertii Imperii* in 1947), Klemperer’s output seems indeed impressive. Such adapted and new types of meaningful work, typically performed in the private sphere that these men turned into a new “space of creation”

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77 Ibid., 354, 379.
78 This is not say that women would not also have felt pride and a sense of accomplishment as a corollary of their performed work. What I intend to stress in this section is that men and masculinity were to a large extent defined by men’s work and work accomplishments, unlike notions of femininity that were not primarily defined by expectations of succeeding in the world of producing goods or engaging in intellectual work, but in cultivating and conserving a private domain in which to raise children and spoil husbands.
81 Guy Miron, “‘Lately, Almost Constantly, Everything Seems Small to Me:’ The Lived Space of German Jews under the Nazi Regime” *Jewish Social Studies*, 20, vol. 1 (Fall 2013), 131.
could serve as an essential tool for some Jewish men in salvaging a sense of manhood during a time of otherwise self-perceived uselessness. As men struggled to stay in positions of productive labor, even the loss of income could be partially compensated.

c) Jewish Men and Forced Labor

Historians have rightly pointed out how degrading and dehumanizing forced labor in the Third Reich was for European Jews, POWs and others. Forced laborers were used as the cheapest possible human resources to produce war materiel required due to the shortage of German working males who were needed at the front. Memoirs have further illustrated how strenuous on their bodies and psyches, how disruptive in their personal and family lives and how economically exploitative, being paid minimal wages, forced labor was for German Jews. In one such recollection, Erich Hopp remembered how physically draining forced labor was for him. Using a third-person narrative voice, Hopp noted:

Since 5 a.m., he is on his feet. For months now, he has been doing forced labor, shoveling soil (Erdarbeiter) and carrying coal (Kohleschipper), and when he comes home at 7.30 at night, [feeling] maltreated (zerschunden) and demoralized (zermürbt), Charlotte’s and his son’s hearts bleed at his dreary appearance (trostlosen Anblicks).\(^\text{82}\)

Despite the state’s attempt to reduce Jewish human beings into the entities required for maximum economic output, it is worth inquiring into how Jews came to process and make sense of their new situations.

Jewish forced labor during the war could ensure a temporary survival. When the first deportations from Germany began in late 1941, German Jews soon realized that these “resettlements” were in fact euphemisms for murder. For a while, it became a routine for German

\(^{82}\text{Erich Hopp, }\textit{Drei von Sechs Millionen}. \text{ Unpublished Manuscript, 1946. GDW Berlin, 1. Trans. S. Huebel.}\)
Jewish female and male forced laborers to ask for deferment papers from their employers as a way of delaying or perhaps avoiding deportation altogether. Ludwig Neumann, for instance, who at first had been exempt from forced labor in 1940 due to a medical condition, felt major relief when he was finally conscripted.\textsuperscript{83} Evidently, work, during the early phase of the Holocaust, acquired significant import for both Jewish men and women. It could guarantee temporary survival for both.

Yet there is also substantial evidence that while working as forced laborers – regardless of how they envisioned their futures – some Jewish men discovered meaning in their work, apart from the ensuing survival it could generate. Central to their masculine self-understandings, Jewish men as forced laborers did not find themselves useless as long they were needed for economic production. This partially contradicts the hypothesis of a gender role reversal in which Jewish men in Nazi Germany, particularly after 1938, resorted to passive, desolate behaviors while Jewish women took over more and more male responsibilities. Certainly, some gender roles were temporarily reversed when the Nazis “destroyed the patriarchal structure of the Jewish family, leaving a void to be filled by women.”\textsuperscript{84} As Marion Kaplan argues:

We find, for the most part, active women, who, early on, expanded their traditional roles. … often taking on male roles both within and outside the family.\textsuperscript{85}

Though there is substantial evidence in women’s self-reflections that their roles and identities radically changed under the Nazis, and many indeed did take on additional burdens in their already burdensome lives, equally notable evidence points to Jewish men trying to stay in control and continue in their roles as breadwinners and providers for their families. Put differently, these men made serious efforts to remain employed and draw life-invigorating meaning from their employment. Surprisingly, this could even include forced labor.

\textsuperscript{83} Camilla Neumann, \textit{Memoirs}, LBINY ME466 MF214 MM59, 3-13.
\textsuperscript{84} Kaplan, “The Jewish Response to the Third Reich,” 72.
\textsuperscript{85} Kaplan, \textit{Between Dignity and Despair}, 8.
Erich Frey (b. 1889), formerly employed in the banking industry, had to quit his job in February 1940 due to his dwindling eyesight. In his 1942 diary addressed to his children abroad, he noted:

After giving up my job, working only sporadically and realizing that at present there was no hope of emigrating to Palestine, I looked around for another occupation [which he found at the firm Blindenwerkstatt Otto Weidt in Berlin, an army-supplying factory that hired blind people]. I am still working there producing scouring brushes, scrubbers… I am very happy to have chosen this trade that allows me to earn some money… so that I won’t become completely dependent on other people even under the most unfavorable circumstances.86

Frey’s diary passionately elucidates how some Jewish men could conceive work as an identity- and meaning-giving element in their lives. At a time when Jews in Berlin and all over the continent were facing deportation to extermination camps in Eastern Europe, the fifty-year-old and blind Erich Frey felt the urge to write to his children abroad that under no circumstances did he want to become a burden to anyone. Even more remarkable, in his diary entry, even if we consider the fact that he might have written his remarks in a filtered, overly positive tone aimed at sparing his children agony, Frey conveys a sense of contentment and independence, making it seem that he freely chose his profession when in actual circumstance all Jews under the age of sixty-five had to perform forced labor. Even if we concede that he was putting on a brave face in his writing, a sense of rewarding fulfillment emanates from the facts that he was employed and that his work was not a meaningless waste of time. For some Jewish middle-class men like Frey, up to the very end life had to orbit around the coordinates of a cultural and gender order that governed the roles of individuals and thereby produced meaning. For Jewish men, to be at work was part of this coordination system; without work, an integral part of their identity would have been eviscerated.

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Gad Beck remembered the pride his father took from his forced labor assignment, working for the federal railways, replacing tiles. “He had to perform very hard physical labor, but in fact he was very content. He had an important task to do!” Cioma Schönhaus (1922-2015) recalled in his memoir:

Papa was a navvy at the time for a civil engineering firm. Fit and bronzed, he explained to me how proper workmen use a shovel: “First of all, you never just use your wrists. And then you must get the leverage right. That way, this work that was meant to shame us just ends up making me stronger. At any rate, I have never felt better.”

Though such memoirs might be taken with a grain of salt as they were written often decades after the actual events and thus might distort the actual physical pain and the existential anxieties that these people and their relatives lived through, particularly in light of the terrible events yet to come for some of these writers, statements of pride through referencing one’s work are striking. Moreover, sources written during the time emphasize this pattern of adaptation and gendered construction of meaning and purposefulness by Jewish men.

In an emotional farewell letter written by Yakob Langer’s father on November 23, 1941, and addressed to his son who had emigrated, the author recalled some of the major events since his son’s departure. Sensing that he might never see his son again as his deportation was imminent (his wife had already died), the father annotated his recent work assignment as a forced laborer at the city plant nursery (Stadtgärtnerei):

The work is diversified (abwechslungsreich) and not too exhausting. I must dig, load dirt and drive or carry it away … I am living the life of a day laborer… and I will gladly tolerate it until the end of the war. The good thing about the work is that it is prevents me from contemplating and makes me temporarily forget my fate. Oma, who now has the sole responsibility over the household, takes great care of me in a loving manner, cooks, tidies up, cleans and is occupied the entire day to

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87 Beck, An Underground Life, 47.
make my life as comfortable as possible. This kind of work is surely suitable for her because it fills her life and surely gives her a sense of internal fulfillment.\textsuperscript{89}

The work ethic and pride which German middle-class Jews grew up with and were supposed to internalize are discernable. Finding some sense and purpose in manual labor (instead of facing boredom and a sense of uselessness at home), Yakob Langer’s father not only draw some contentment from his work at the nursey; he also reproduced the established gender convention that divided masculinity and femininity according to different types of work in different spheres. While women had been traditionally assigned a place in the domestic sphere, men, even as forced laborers in the Third Reich, could find some meaning in their engagement in (manual) labor outside the home.

In 1941, when regular mail was still maintained between Germany and neutral countries or places such as Shanghai, Norbert Neufeld, who with his wife Vera and their son Denny (b. 1941) had remained in Germany, wrote a letter addressed to his parents-in-law who had moved to Shanghai:

I am very content with my work. I earn 1.25 Marks but we have high deductions… At least it is better than everything else… I am working in one of the biggest uniform factories. It is only five minutes away from home.\textsuperscript{90}

Perhaps written as a type of justification for not trying harder or sooner to emigrate together with his in-laws, Neufeld takes astonishing pride in his work in one of the largest factories in the country. Working for a supplier of the Wehrmacht, the institution responsible for carrying out Germany’s war, Neufeld, a Jewish man, found meaning in his employment. The letter serves as an indication that as long as he, the husband and father, could work, a Jewish existence seemed


possible in Germany. The interconnection between the decision-making process pertaining to emigration and the gendered concept of male work and making a living become again conspicuous.

Former professor Victor Klemperer, who had privately continued in his intellectual pursuits, noted some new-found pride in a radically different work environment as an unskilled, blue-collar forced laborer in a factory in Dresden in December 1943:

Now for the last three weeks, I have been operating the simple no. 14 machine by myself. I produce document files for the army... 25,000 of superior paper are finished... How much ingenuity there is in a window envelope, such as banks use! The machine required for that is literally a machine town.\(^{91}\)

For Klemperer, who in his lifetime had taken few opportunities to engage in physical, manual labor, found, though in unforeseen and unsolicited circumstances, a gratifying sense of purpose in his forced labor assignment. He described as an almost-adventure-like experience in which he was placed into an unknown world of industrial processes with machines that he had previously never encountered but that he was now fascinated by. To him, forced labor was simultaneously strenuous on his fragile physique and inspiring.

Other similar sources from the time demonstrate how symbolically important remaining in work was for Jewish men. After the war had broken out and deportations had begun, International Red Cross letters with their twenty-five-word limits constituted the only means to communicate between separated family members. Many of these letters are written proof of how work continued its function of imbuing meaning into men’s lives. In each of four such letters, sent on September 17, 1942, December 4, 1942, January 4, 1943, and November 8, 1943, the young Ernst Wachsner (b. 1919) wrote to his sister in the United States that he was healthy and working. In one he wrote: “Parents departed to unknown [destination] on my birthday. I am working and

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living well like before."92 In such letters, a perhaps shocking impression of normality pervades, likely because the authors of such letters hoped to evade censorship but also to avoid causing concern and fear among their relatives. Strikingly though, the concept of work constituted a central facet in this pervasive illusion of normal Jewish life in wartime Germany.

When regular mail was suspended and civilians restricted to Red Cross letter correspondence, Norbert Neufeld’s wife, Vera Neufeld (born Abraham), made it a routine to write about their son Denny and her husband’s work:

June 13, 1942,
Beloved Parents & Brother,
We are healthy. Norbert is working. Denny is walking now. Write every month. Denny kisses your pictures. Comes after us. Many kisses Vera, Norbert, Denny.

Fig. 21 A Red Cross letter by Ernst Wachsner. “Parents departed to unknown on my birthday. I am living and working well like before.” September 13, 1942.

October 26, 1942,
Dear Parents & Brother,
We are all healthy. Norbert is working. Since January, I have written monthly. Denny is walking; he is a smart, blond curly boy. Kisses Vera, Denny, Norbert.

January 5, 1943,
Everyone healthy. Norbert is working. Denny is getting big, smart, developing well. Comes after us. Says Oma, Opa. Showing him pictures, which he kisses. Kisses Vera, Norbert.

For Jewish men born in the late 19th or early 20th century, work had become an integral part of their lives and their identities. Even during the Nazi regime and World War II, work was deemed so important to perform that life without it seemed illogical. Work provided a normalizing sense of life for both Jewish men and their families. With the husband at work, even forced work, as Eva Neufeld indicated in her letters, life continued to orbit on a seemingly stable and predictable trajectory that governed, among other coordinates, gender roles. A world in which these coordinates were invalidated was hard to conceive. As the father of Hans Oskar Löwenstein (b. 1926) soberly opined, because all German men were at the front, someone had to produce the armaments: “The Germans cannot be that stupid to kill all the cheap laborers.”

Conclusion

John Tosh has argued, work was one of the central foundations of masculinity. Yet, a proper job and a viable household are highly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the economic cycle: “Individual men might experience acute loss of masculine self-respect by being thrown out of work.” Unemployment, as James Messerschmidt concurs, undermines the patriarchal

94 Tosh, “What should Historians do with Masculinity?”, 192.
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breadwinner/good provider masculinity. In the Third Reich, it was more than just a few individual Jewish men who were “thrown out” of work. Through their economic attacks against all German Jews, the Nazis violently undermined hegemonic masculinity for Jewish men, who had been participating in a capitalist system and had internalized the two ways work masculinity functioned. Work was considered an economic necessity; Jewish men performed work to acquire wealth and prosperity for themselves and their families. Work, however, also gained cultural symbolic significance, a means to obtain status and respect and to legitimize the power that they exercised within their families and within society in general.

Based on this work masculinity, this chapter has argued for a more pronounced differentiation of understanding of Jewish masculinities in the Third Reich. As I have shown in the first part, it is sound to reason that Jewish men in the Third Reich increasingly faced the pressure to conform to gender expectations to be self-sufficient and provide for themselves and their families. These pressures became ever more aggravating, especially for men of the upper-middle class who had made significant achievements in their work lives and who had linked their status to their professions. Their gender identities as respected men thus significantly intersected with their class consciousnesses. It was strikingly Jewish men of the higher class who responded to their growing concerns and fears by drastically changing their demeanors, withdrawing into the private sphere, becoming desolate or passive men and sometimes even resorting to suicide. Honnet-Sichel’s memory of her husband’s loss of appetite was one of the more classic signs of depression. This feeling of failure was aggravated by the state propaganda that not simply praised the Nazi economic recovery and the creation of millions of jobs, but that also discursively put the “Aryan” male in a central position with images of self-sufficient men who presided over their

obedient children and loving housewives at home. While ordinary German families pursued economic improvement, Jewish men as the heads of their households were excluded. As Judith Gerson has argued:

[Employment in the postwar memoirs of Jewish men points to an important understanding of dominant and subordinate masculinities. While in Germany, men’s ability to provide for their families was a sign of their successful participation in hegemonic, patriarchal life, the significance to the loss of jobs and earnings... signals another form of exclusion of German-Jewish men from participating in hegemonic masculinity.]

However, as this chapter also elucidated, Jewish emasculation through marginalization did not follow an inevitable trail materializing from Jewish men’s growing pressures and losses in the field of employment. Instead, this chapter has demonstrated that, especially in the first few years of Hitler’s regime, a considerable group of men took on proactive roles in defending their socio-economic positions and gender identities as working men. For several years, many Jewish men were successful in interconnecting their notions of military masculinity and their understandings of work masculinity. As war veterans, many benefitted from the veteran exemptions that temporarily spared their dismissals, even though the process of obtaining such exemptions must have been nerve-wracking and arduous. Some men managed to stay self-employed, either in their accustomed professions or, when by the late 1930s military exemptions no longer applied and more Jewish businesses were Aryanized, by carving out niches that promised to provide at least some income in Germany as salesmen, tutors, or black-marketeers. Their endeavors were highly performative as they not only reflected a means to make an economic subsistence. Jewish men’s behaviors were also an implicit acknowledgement of the social practice that pays high regard only to working men. Thus, Jewish men’s attempt to remain in work was to a large extent governed by social and cultural expectations that in turn had an impact on their gender identities.

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3. Jewish Men and Work

The degrading process of remaining employed often coincided with the reduction of standards of living, with smaller living quarters and other material losses as well as adverse effects on men’s psychological well-being. Yet, it would go too far to speak of an overwhelmingly emasculating process. As long as men remained in work, they could frequently derive the essential meaning needed to preserve their gender identities as men. This could include even the unpaid yet meaningful work, performed by former teachers and scholars such as Victor Klemperer and Willy Cohn who found major satisfaction in their continued intellectual activity.

Finally, in an attempt to diversify the experiences, perceptions and coping mechanism of Jewish men whose economic existences were threatened, this chapter has shown that even forced labor under certain circumstances could provide some substance to allow gender identities to be sustained. As degrading and exploitative as forced labor was, for some Jewish men it resembled a sense of purpose, a sense of being needed, and a sense of being useful and productive. While it might have camouflaged the doomed fate for many to come, for the time being it helped them and their dependents, as Eva Neufeld’s letters indicate, to maintain some sense of normalized life with traditional gender conventions in place.

In short, though depriving Jewish men of their work which they had used to identify themselves and build cultural-social capital, it is misleading to prematurely conclude that by taking away their familiar work, men were no longer men. Even suicide, as outlined above, does not manifest emasculation, the last resort available to Jewish men who thought they had lost everything. Some in fact chose suicide to avoid the German state legally becoming the heir to all their possessions. Jews who “relocated” outside of the Reich – a euphemism for deportation – were deemed to have automatically agreed to confer their belongings to the state. Josef Juliusberg (b. 1871), a wealthy businessman, chose to circumvent exactly this type of Nazi robbery. In his suicide
note and last will, he declared that it was against his honor to let the remains of the wealth that he had accumulated through honest and arduous work over the course of thirty-six years be confiscated.\textsuperscript{97} Evidently, the material manifestations of male labor and the pride associated with it could even influence some Jewish men’s decision to end their lives. We thus need to be careful in our conclusions about the motives and driving factors of Jewish men’s behaviors. As in Juliusberger’s case, it is more sensible to argue that the author was not emasculated, but to the end upheld some decision-making power over his life, his lifetime’s achievements, and his gender identity.

\textsuperscript{97} Fischer, \textit{Erzwungener Freitod}, 56.
Chapter 4

Jewish Husbands and Fathers
in the Third Reich

1. Introduction

What defines an ideal man changes over time and yet, as George Mosse has noted, certain features remain remarkably stable and resistant to change. Notions of fatherhood and marriage are two such elements, the topics of this chapter. As Steve Nock explains:

The traditional model of marriage assumes a husband who supports his wife and children. Few acceptable alternatives exist for married men... Historically, masculinity has implied three things about a man. He should be the father of his wife’s children, he should be the provider for his wife and children, and he should protect the family. Accordingly, the male who refused to provide or protect his family was not only a bad husband; he was somehow less than a man.1

Throughout the 19th century, the family took on a new importance in the discourse of European reformers, scientists and other experts who argued that only in the family could virtuous humans be raised. The family was elevated into a bastion of morality, a sacred institution that needed to be preserved and protected. With a new interest in the organization of the nation-state, the proper order of the sexes became a key issue in public debates and publications beginning around 1800. Ute Frevert has shown how such male-dominated discourses sought to define the proper role and place for women, whose natural place was assigned to the private sphere where they would take care of household, the upbringing of children and religiosity.2 The public sphere was reserved for men to engage in work, politics

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2 Frevert has shown, for instance, that anatomical and cultural definitions of women shifted over time and took on major spaces in 18th and 19th century encyclopedias, while definitions of men were taken for granted and could not even be found in such works. See Ute Frevert, Mann und Weib, Weib und Mann: Geschlechterdifferenzen in der Moderne (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1995).
and male-exclusive institutions of socialization. 3 With such separate yet complementary gender spheres embedded in the cultural framework in Europe, the focus of attention shifted by the end of the century to scientific and medical but also völkisch and racial discourses, expressing concern over birthrates and the health of the nation. Yet, it was the Nazis who pushed the notion of ensuring Germans’ survival by ways of population growth. Demographics, population politics and eugenics became legally intertwined in pursuit of imperialist-racialist grand schemes, with “Aryan” women being awarded medals for delivering Hitler’s future soldiers.

As the previous chapters have outlined, the process of establishing oneself as a respected man, Jewish or not, and to move beyond the state of adolescence, was multi-faceted and typically included the cultivation of honor and reputation in different domains such as the military or the public sphere, in which men were supposed to find meaningful and financially rewarding employment. In a system that considered men the central figures with wives and children as men’s legal subordinates and dependents, men took on a growing number of pressing responsibilities. Men were expected not only to provide for their family – the growing struggle for Jews to conform to this role in the Third Reich was analyzed in the previous chapter

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3 Historians still commonly utilize or refer to the concept of separate spheres that originated in 19th-century discourses. Recently, however, critics have rightly pointed out that cultural norms should not be confused with social realities and numerous studies have proven that there were no rigid boundaries that divided men and women into separate spheres. Instead, women took on a much more public role, in welfare and religious associations for instance, while men had a more prominent role at home, as fathers and husbands, than previously acknowledged. Still, for the purpose of this study, it is essential to emphasize the cultural norms and expectations of both genders including men’s presumed roles as providers and protectors. For a good overview of literature on the separate sphere model, see Leonore Davidson & Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and Kathryn Gleadle, “Revisiting Family Fortunes: Reflections on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Publication of L. Davidoff & C. Hall (1987) Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850,” Women’s History Review 16, no. 5 (2007): 773-782.

4. Jewish Husbands and Fathers

– but to perform the role of protector. A family’s well-being did not rest entirely on the satisfaction of material needs, but also on their physical and emotional comfort and safety, the focus of this chapter.

According to Benjamin Baader, in 19th-century Jewish thought, the family stood at the heart of Jewish society.⁵ Acculturated and emancipated, middle-class German-Jewish men took on ever more of the dominant and decision-making roles in their families and marriages, as did gentile men. In Jewish as in gentile families, the status of the *pater familias*, the patriarch, was considered a symbol, an icon for men having reached full adulthood. Because German Jews had acculturated and accepted the ensuing norms and values of gentile society, as heads of their households and successfully fulfilling the provider and protector role, Jewish men were granted participation and acceptance in the public sphere of politics and civil affairs in the second half of the 19th century.⁶ When forty years later, the Nazi system undermined Jewish masculinity in the realm of military honor and through restrictions on means of employment, the Nazis also challenged Jewish men’s roles as heads of households and their ability to perform their domestic protector and guardian roles, a change in Jewish everyday life to which, however, historians so far have paid little attention.

In her study on gender and the Holocaust, Dalia Ofer stated that “Jewish husbands and fathers lost the ability to function as heads of families” but did not clarify how this loss occurred

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⁵ Benjamin M. Baader, *Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture in Germany, 1800-1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 94.
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and how Jewish men experienced it. Similarly, Nechama Tec writes in the conclusion of *Resilience and Courage: Men and Women and the Holocaust*:

[B]y barring Jewish men from the fulfillment of their traditional family obligations, the Germans had attacked their core masculine identification. That is, the Germans made it impossible for Jewish men to fulfill the role of protector and placed almost impossible challenges in the fulfillment of that of breadwinner. When Jewish men found themselves unable to do what traditional society expected of them, they frequently became demoralized and depressed.

Though such general conclusions are not incorrect in themselves, they remain rather vague assertions. Robert Moeller thus argues:

[So far] historical studies of the family have contained few men and paid little attention to masculinity. We seem to have written fatherless history of the family… [T]he [existing] work only suggests the outlines of a much broader research agenda that should extend to include a systematic look at fatherhood.

In her recent and more specific criticism directed at Holocaust scholars, Anna-Madeleine Halkes-Carey argues that historians have one-sidedly depicted Jewish fatherhood in terms of a collapse resulting from men being unable to provide for and protect their families. Instead, an image of Jewish fathers as passive, despondent and depressed has prevailed, while “mothers… have been praised for their attempts to protect their children…. As if fathers played no role…”

Building on the conclusion of my previous chapter that has argued that Jewish men assigned considerable significance to the practice of remaining in meaningful employment and

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remarkably many continued in their provider role, this chapter argues that monolithic depictions of Jewish men’s experiences in the Third Reich must be reconsidered. To argue that Jewish men were emasculated because they were unable to provide for their families – a hypothesis I have partially refuted – and because of this could no longer perform the role of the protector is an oversimplification that does not give proper credit to how Jewish men tried to persevere as fathers and husbands.

This chapter will demonstrate that masculine identities of Jewish men as husbands and fathers were subject to a transformation with protector roles in the public sphere often reduced to a symbolic level. Yet, as part of this process, Jewish men remained far from passive in reacting to the contingencies of a Nazi dictatorship. By promoting their families’ emigration efforts (though quite late and often by relenting to their spouses’ pressure), Jewish men sought to keep up a semblance of the protector role. While such efforts became harder to realize over time, Jewish men compensated for their “inabilities” by taking on a new presence in the domestic sphere as emotional caretakers and thereby helped alleviate some of the hardship experienced by their spouses and children. With their manhood questioned in the public, cultural sphere through the loss of military status and often depicted as sexual perverts while also struggling to meet income needs, Jewish men and parts of their gender identities shifted into the role of the private, non-public man, the supportive and supported partner, family man, and fatherly mentor. The first section analyzes Jewish men as husbands in their function as protectors and partners. The second looks at Jewish fathers, first in their protector, then in their mentor roles.
2. Jewish Husbands in the Third Reich

a) Jewish husbands as protectors

Paradoxically, despite the consolidation of a definition of bourgeois masculinity in the 19th century, the key concept of men acting as protectors (unlike the concept of men as economic providers) was constructed in rather vague terms and never materialized into concrete patterns of expectations and generic behaviors. The concept remained confined to the world of cultural and literary discourses, to love stories and dramas with princely knights rescuing noble women from evil; in reality, the gender construction of the male protector had few historical parallels or precedents. The 19th century was a relatively peaceful era in European history and even the romanticized propaganda during World War I, which frequently depicted men as the heroic defenders of fatherland and family, provided little practical guidance in relation to the actual display and behavior of men as protectors of women and children.

In 19th- and early 20th-century Europe, men were not born as warrior-heroes who instinctively protected fatherland and family but as individuals who were exposed to cultural gender norms and values that defined what was considered normative masculinity. As imagined protectors, men had to first learn to internalize and enact such roles.11 Thus, when in the 1930s German-Jewish men started to have concerns and anxieties about their dependents’ lives and physical well-being under the increasing Nazi curtailments and restrictions, these men had few precedents they could rely on and use for orientation and guidance. The gendered norm of men protecting their wives and children remained a pressing, yet vague formulation of masculinity.

11 Karen Hagemann argues that “domesticity and sensibility were regarded not merely as fundamental virtues of loving and caring fathers and husbands, but also as prerequisites of patriotism and valor. For only a man who loved his own family, home and fatherland from the bottom of his heart would be prepared to risk his life to protect and defend them.” See Karen Hagemann, “German Heroes: The Cult of the Death for the Fatherland,” in Masculinities in Politics and War, eds. Karen Hagemann, John Tosh & Stefan Dudink (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 127.
In sources written at the time and in retrospect, some Jewish men “confessed” the growing anxieties they felt in their roles as protectors for their wives. For many Jewish couples and families in the 1930s, however, sending the men out of Germany first became a common coping mechanism in responding to the increasing curtailment and brutalization of life by the Nazi state. In the late 1930s, there was a growing perception among German Jews that Jewish men were in far greater physical danger, especially following the pogroms of November 1938 when 30,000 men were arrested (see Chapter 5). In such scenarios, the fulfilment of the protector role by absent husbands became an impossible challenge as the concept had always implied a sense of security (Geborgenheit) that directly emanated from being physically close to the male protector. Instead of being protectors, these men resembled a group of men in need of protection. Absent from their families, they had effectively lost their protecting function.

However, even when Jewish men were present at home and within their families, the protector roles did erode, though the actual circumstances, the time and place, and the ensuing degree of feelings of guilt, could vary. Camilla Neumann recalled in her memoirs the moment when the deportation orders for her and her husband arrived in 1942. The Berlin couple contemplated committing suicide to spare themselves the inhuman treatment that they assumed was awaiting them. In this moment, according to the author, her husband Ludwig felt the need

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12 The pogroms of 1938, commonly referred to as Kristallnacht, involve the violent events of November 9 and 10, 1938. Kristallnacht owes its name to the shattered glass that got broken from the windows of synagogues, homes, and Jewish-owned businesses plundered and destroyed. Historians agree as Marion Kaplan has shown that in the 1930s, German Jews, men and women, perceived Jewish men generally to be in greater physical danger and thus often prioritized men’s emigration. See Marion Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 138. See also Dalia Ofer & Lenore Weitzman, “The Role of Women in the Holocaust,” in Women in the Holocaust eds. Dalia Ofer & Lenore Weitzman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 6.

13 The pain of separation and the concomitant perceived failure to perform the protector role was not limited to German-Jewish men in the Third Reich. Hester Vaizey argued German Wehrmacht soldiers, absent from home, did not conform to the hard masculinity ideal shared intimacies in their letters to their letters, showing great concern over their wives’ well-being in wartime Germany. See Hester Vaizey, “Husbands and Wives: An Evaluation of the Emotional Impact of World War Two in Germany,” European History Quarterly 40, no. 3 (2010): 389–411.
to apologize for his failure as a husband, for having messed up in his duty of protection. When both husband and wife were no longer deferred from deportation by their employer, he took full responsibility upon himself for not having tried to emigrate sooner:

[Ludwig] asked me for forgiveness because he had not dealt with the issue of emigration when it was still possible. I could not watch how he, in addition to all the other agonies, tortured himself with self-reproaches [Selbstvorwürfe]. Thus, I consoled him and told him that... back then, it also had not been my full conviction [to emigrate]. I only said this to calm him down. Since 1939, when we had arguments over the question of emigration, there has never been any discord [Mißton] between us.\(^\text{14}\)

In Neumann’s memoir, the gender image of the husband being the supposed protector emerges next to the underlying gender structure according to which men had the final say in important family and marriage decisions. According to Neumann, she had been in favor of emigration from Germany for much longer but was unable to prevail against her husband’s reservation.\(^\text{15}\)

Though having lost on this issue she stayed by her husband’s side and did not criticize her husband directly for his “mistake.”\(^\text{16}\) Yet, in her memoir, she insinuated that due to her husband’s inactivity, he had failed in his protector role and instead put both at serious risk. When they were unable to adhere to or enforce the gender role, Jewish men appeared as helpless

\(^{15}\) This supports Marion Kaplan’s thesis that “women were more inclined to emigrate because they were not as integrated into the public world.” “But decisions regarding emigration seem to have been made by husbands despite important role reversal. Both men and women generally cling to traditional roles in responding to the politics situations.” See Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 63 & 67.
\(^{16}\) While Rose and Neuman had internalized the gender norm of being protectors (though they were unable to full them ultimately), the notion of protection, as Marion Kaplan has shown, did not exclusively apply to Jewish men only. Jewish women, more so than ever, took charge of trying to get their Jewish husbands out of the concentration camps following Kristallnacht (see Chapter 5). Many such women went from government office to the next to enable their husband’s release, while often also initiating their family’s emigration process. Certainly, the protector role applied to women as well, and Jewish wives and mothers heroically performed this role in the Third Reich, trying to keep families together and keeping their children safe. What is central to this discussion, however, is that under normative conditions, men are expected to fulfill the gender role of being the protector. When they were not able to (or unwilling to) do so, such as in late 1930s Nazi Germany when more than 30,000 Jewish men were deported to concentration camps, it was Jewish women who often felt they had to step in. Yet, this does not mean that the protector role was abandoned or became redundant for Jewish men and it thus warrants historical analysis.
and unmanly. Another crucial piece of the gender mosaic that constituted Jewish men’s identities was broken.

Gendered concerns for their wives transcended men contemplating their families’ emigration. Particularly when the Nazis outlawed emigration in 1941 and German Jews became ever more subject to arbitrary, discriminatory restrictions, deprivation and other laws, the emotional and physical health of Jewish men and women rapidly deteriorated. Though there was little hope and no concrete way for how to rectify their predicaments, Jewish men still felt responsible for their wives. In a diary-memoir that Adolf Guttentag (b. 1868) started to maintain in 1942 for his overseas son, he wrote:

**August 22, 1942:**
How I wish that Mutti looked a little better. Her pallor surely is related to her vascular spasm which occur at every new worry and every frightening news… She sleeps well, if only she allowed herself more rest! …While I am at home much of the time, helping Mutti as best I can, Mutti runs errands.

**September 2, 1942:**
Again and again, I am faced with the question, shall I or shall I not take Veronal and end my life on the day I receive notice of our evacuation. My first concern is for Mutti; if she wanted it, I would do it immediately. But if she had hopes of seeing you again some time, it would, of course, be sad if I didn’t make it, too.

**October 10, 1942:**
I have lived a happy life, long united with Mutti and I am eternally grateful to her, so my greatest worry is how to spare her these worrisome changes.

Guttentag’s diary excerpts offer a valuable insight into the author’s emotional state during the final phase of German-Jewish existence prior to the implementation of the Holocaust. Palpably, the author is greatly concerned over his wife’s well-being. As a former physician, he notes his wife’s deteriorating condition against which he seemingly cannot do anything except for his compensatory performance as a houseman in the private sphere, helping “Mutti” as much as

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17 Veronal was a sleeping medication.
possible with the strenuous household tasks. In an utmost selfless statement, he also consigned to his wife the decision-making power to end their lives through suicide. In his helpless state, all Guttentag could do, it seems, was to express pity for his wife, regret his impotence to remedy the situation and implicitly acknowledge his failure to have spared his wife all the agony that she had not deserved. Guttentag and his wife ended their lives on October 29, 1942.

The pretense of keeping up a gender order with prescribed roles of physically protecting their wives was paramount for German Jewish men in coping with Nazi antisemitism and they expressed such concrete concerns and feelings of responsibility more explicitly when for the first time they came in direct contact with Nazi violence. Julius Guggenheim (1883-1970) recalled in his 1940 memoir that both he and his wife had secured immigration documents for the United States when one day he was arrested for alleged departure tax fraud. During his maltreatment in several prisons in Berlin, all he was thinking about – according to his post-war recollection – was that the Nazis spare his wife from torture:

After I still had not made a confession, because I had not committed any crime, I was told that my wife in that case would be arrested. I would then surely make a confession. He [the Gestapo official] was making allegations of God knows what. I can only remember that I emphatically explained to him that he can cut me into pieces \[mich in Stücke zerreisen\], but he should spare my innocent wife who would break over this.  

In Guggenheim’s memoir, the author’s re-lived concerns over his wife’s safety are indicative, even more so since his wife was in fact not subjected to torture. The author acknowledges his powerlessness over their torturers and by implication the impossibility of protecting his wife, placing in him a serious state of concern.

With the deterioration of the war and the beginning of air raid attacks by the Allied forces, German Jews also became subject to the direct effects of war, destruction and misery.

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Jews were not spared from losing their shelters and lives in the war zone that Germany had become. Victor Klemperer, who was one of the last remaining Jews in the city of Dresden, reflected in his diary how he had experienced the infamous “firestorm” in February 1945. As an elderly and unfit man in deteriorating health, he could offer little physical protection to keep his wife safe during the bombardment. Yet Klemperer was in a state of constant worry about his wife, from whom he was separated in the chaos of the firestorm. In his diary, it seems almost quixotic how Klemperer still envisioned his male role as protector though facing invincible obstacles that he was completely helpless against and clearly not in control of. “Was Eva lost, had she been able to save herself? Had I thought too little about her?”

Even if his wife had stayed by his side during the bombing and they had not been separated, Klemperer would likely not have been able to offer her any additional protection and shelter. Being unable to fulfill this gender norm, Klemperer was overridden by a sense of guilt. As the above examples demonstrate, Klemperer and Guggenheim were the products of their socio-cultural environments in which external pressures of gender-role conformity regarding proper husbandly behavior were at work. Jewish men had a firm tradition of internalizing cultural gender norms that they eventually came to view as uncoerced and normal. But when the means to publicly perform them were restricted, Jewish masculinity was undermined and marginalized. As all the above cases demonstrate, Jewish men were quite self-aware of their powerlessness and inability to protect their wives, though only few, such as Neumann, directly linked them to their gender identity.

b) Jewish husbands as providers of contentment and comfort

While there was little to do to physically embody and enact the male protector role for Jewish men in the Third Reich, there were symbolic means and gestures for Jewish husbands to maintain healthy marriages – most notably by providing comfort and a sense of happiness to their wives. Bourgeois standards not only distinguished a proper husband by the material rewards he brought to the table and the protection from outside adversities he afforded for his family. A good husband was a man who reciprocated, in a controlled and nuanced manner, the emotional comfort, love and care, he received from his wife. According to Benjamin Baader, starting in the 19th century, especially in Jewish culture, men were exhorted to practice virtues and expressions of masculine tenderness, softness and forgiveness.

In the Third Reich, Jewish husbands (continued to) demonstrate affection to make their wives’ lives more comfortable. Even though material resources became stringently limited, Jewish husbands were able to symbolically if not materially perform chivalric behaviors, trying to make their wives feel loved and even spoiled on certain occasions. While this might seem trivial at first glance, the emotional lives of German Jews, who by 1942 had lived through almost an entire decade of a Nazi dictatorship whose central tenet was the elimination of all things Jewish, is no trivial matter to examine.

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21 Ute Frevert showed that starting in the late 18th century, the expression of emotions and feelings by educated, cultivated men in Europe was welcomed. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1810 read: “Sensibility is experienced in a much higher degree in civilized than in savage nations and among persons liberally educated than among boors and illiterate mechanics.” Increased criticism in the 19th century, however, led to fears of male hypersensitivity and thus “educational intervention was needed to prevent youths from becoming mawkish, weak, and doleful.” Thus, the role-model male was portrayed as “a citizen distinguished by his vigilant, lively but also controlled life of emotion, distancing him both from the rough men of the lower strata and also from the blasé dandies of the decadent aristocracy. This also distinguished him from all women who were not themselves capable of such self-control and reflection on account of their fragile, nervous constitution and character.” Ute Frevert “Defining Emotions: Concepts and Debates over Three Centuries,” in *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling, 1700-2000*, eds. Ute Frevert & Thomas Dixon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14-30.

22 Baader, *Gender, Judaism and Bourgeois Culture*, 6. See also pp. 78-95.
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Western historians have been recently advancing into the history of emotions to gain a deeper understanding of people’s most intimate thoughts and feelings and their motives to act in the ways they do. In their recent work, Aleida Assmann and Ines Detmert argued that “historians have only recently discovered the role of emotions in the making and experiencing of history.”23 Such histories illuminate how emotions connect human beings to one another. But because emotions are founded upon reciprocity and create relationships, facilitating social bonding, they are integral to any study that examines German-Jewish life in the Third Reich.24

In his memoir, Gad Beck recalled that while at work performing forced labor, his father one day brought my mother a gigantic bottle of French perfume. It was in bad taste but was quite a big deal. One of his foremen had sold it to him under the table.25

Beck’s father’s purchase of a such gift for his wife – something which under normal circumstances a teenage boy might not have taken note of in a diary or remembered decades later in a memoir – represents an instance that shows that the coordinates of a cultural gender order with men acting as chivalric gentlemen vis-à-vis women did not entirely vanish under the Nazi dictatorship. Living as outcasts and facing material destitution, poverty and an omnipresence of violence, German Jews did not shatter their cultural norms and behaviors. Instead, expressions and gestures of love and care facilitated the social bonding between husband and wife. Emotions are exchanged reciprocally, and Jewish men, like their wives, participated in this system of maintaining, if not strengthening, family and marriage relationships in which emotions took a central role and which German Jews continued to rely

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on in their darkest hour. The perfume bottle was such a symbolic gesture of love by a Jewish husband who conformed to cultural gender conventions which were considered normative for husbands. By keeping up with such traditions, not only did German Jews preserve a vital sense of agency in an environment that tried to deprive German Jews of that capacity, but continued in their day-to-day lives with marriage conventions that provided a sense of normalizing stability and dignity. Though continuing with their “normal” lives was an exasperating endeavor, driven by despair and marked by setbacks, it yet points to an image opposite to that of the passive, despondent Jewish man. Revealing continuities, particularly when one would have expected otherwise, is as important a task as the historian’s quest to uncover change.

On his wife’s birthday, July 12, 1944, Victor Klemperer noted: “Eva’s birthday today. My hands quite empty again. Not even a flower.”26 On his wedding anniversary two weeks earlier, Klemperer lamented: “Any kind of celebration is made impossible.”27 The fact that Klemperer wrote down these notes is revealing in itself. Klemperer’s diary entries are indicative of the gender expectation of indulging one’s wife on special occasions such as her birthday or a wedding anniversary. This norm did not change or become invalidated even under the most severe oppressions and attacks against their livelihoods during the war. Klemperer wrote: “The only novelty on this wedding anniversary: an air raid warning from quarter to nine to quarter to ten.”28 In a situation of their lives being in jeopardy, Klemperer was mentally preserving his identity as a man by being a husband who, if not able to present his wife with a proper gift on her special day, then at least critically reflected on his expected role and contemplated his

27 Ibid, 329.
28 Ibid, 329.
perceived failure to adhere to these norms. The thought itself counted. Klemperer’s reflections thus validate Nock’s point

that marriage needs to be viewed as a social institution that symbolized more than just the act of marrying a woman. It was a system of rules defined by cultural assumptions.29

Flowers on a wedding day or the purchase of perfume resemble standard conventions that Jewish men hoped to adhere to, and in case of Beck’s father, could successfully execute.

The marriage of Camilla Neumann is a further example of how gestures, visible demonstrations of thinking about one other, could count for much. When both husband and wife were conscripted to forced labor in 1941, their marriage drastically changed. Because Germany’s wartime economy was geared to full mobilization, Jewish forced workers (and others) were subjected to shift work, and Camilla and her husband Ludwig, as it turned out, had to work shifts at opposing times. Camilla remembered that worse than accepting the double burden of doing housework and factory work was the fact that she and her husband could hardly see each other:

When I worked a late shift, I would not see Ludwig from Sunday night to Saturday at noon, thus six days. But every night, there were a few endearing lines written by Ludwig on my night table, and of course, I would also leave him similar notes [Zettelchen] on his table. When he got up and left early in the morning, I was still asleep and when I returned from work at midnight, he was already asleep. Before I went to bed, I ate something and then prepared Ludwig’s breakfast. Thus, I did not go to bed until 1:30 am and Ludwig got up at 4 am.30

For the Neumanns, and most other Jewish couples, their marriage relationships came under duress in the Third Reich. Not only the quality of time to be spent together was subject to change but the quantity thereof as well. While husbands had typically worked outside the home and were absent for much of the day, this was perceived as a normal arrangement in the socio-

economic and gender-cultural order of which German Jews were part. When through forced labor, however, marriage life was so violently turned upside down that both husband and wife were driven outside their homes for forced labor, there were few other spaces left to cultivate their marriage other than to write doting notes to one another, expressing care and love.

When deprivations and restrictions were not yet as severe, Jewish men had it somewhat easier to perform the masculine role model of the cavalier husband. Hertha Nathorff made a brief note in her diary on her wedding anniversary in 1935: “Red roses on my table.”31 As the length of her diary entry indicates, the gendered custom of husbands purchasing flowers on a wedding anniversary was not deemed an extraordinary event in 1935 that warranted any further elaboration, but a standard gesture, unlike Klemperer’s diary entries several years later, when the author would lament how he was unable to fulfil his role.

For Jewish husbands, it was imperative to perform if not the protector role then at least the roles of comforters to their wives, even if these roles were limited to rudimentary levels and symbolic gestures. It enabled them to keep part of their masculine identity. Yet preserving a healthy marriage was no one-dimensional project to which Jewish men only contributed without also benefitting from it. Marriage improved Jewish men’s lives.

Carl Schwabe (1891-1967) recounted that during his struggle to keep his business alive in the 1930s, he could rely on his wife's support, without which he could not have endured all the pain.32 In his diary, Paul Steiner noted in 1939 that he could forget, even if only temporarily, all the negatives in his life when he was with his girlfriend.33 Willy Cohn, whose existential concerns I have analyzed in the previous chapter, wrote in his diary in 1933:

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31 Hertha Nathorff, Das Tagebuch der Hertha Nathorff, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1987), 75.
32 Carl Schwabe, Memoir, LBINY, ME586 MM68, 55.
33 Guggenheim, Memoir, Diary Entry June 17, 1938.
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Yesterday evening we [his wife Trudi and he] spoke frankly about a number of matters, the things that weigh heavily on me, and so it is now easier for me. I told Trudi how unbearable I find things and how helpless I often feel about the struggle to make a living.34

Two years later, on his wedding anniversary, he wrote:

We married twelve years ago today, a dozen years that have not always been easy. But Trudi has stuck by me through thick and thin and raised my children. For this I am deeply grateful and for everything that she has been to me. Hopefully we will be granted many more years to fight this battle for existence together… To celebrate the day, we plan to ride out a bit into the country.35

In diary excerpts such as these, a new level of emotionality in husband-wife relationship is discernible. References to their wives’ emotional support deliver an understanding of married life and show how living in a serious relationship was of fundamental importance to both Jewish men and women. As “emotional men,” Jewish husbands adapted to their new situations and were able to give support to and provide emotionally for their wives, while reciprocally Jewish men also came to increasingly rely on emotional support from their wives.

In a suicide note to his son Yakob Langer, who had previously emigrated to the United States, Yakob’s father wrote:

Essen, November 23, 1941

My Beloved Son,

…

When Mama’s lifeless [entseelter] body was brought into the hospital room, following her death, I stayed with her for one and a half hours to say goodbye. How terrible these hours and days were... You know how happy our marriage has been, in what an intimately heartful and spiritual relationship (innige Herzens- und Geistesgemeinschaft) we have lived together and how we have been adjusted to one another. Mama has been of such affectionateness (Zärtlichkeit) in the last few months that I have repeatedly told her that she is wasting her entire love that she has felt for you and for me, now on me alone. Thus, we lived even more withdrawn in the last while. We sufficed for one another entirely and did not need anyone. In fact, we have not found anyone in

35) Cohn, Breslau Diaries, 88.
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Essen who was close to us and who meant much to us. All the more terrible now is the emptiness that I am feeling (empfinde). I often consider myself superfluous... Following Mama’s death, I have lost all motivation to emigrate because securing an existence all by myself in a foreign country with foreign people did not seem appealing to me at my age... Now I am closing this letter my beloved son and take farewell from you with a heavy heart. Have a good life and stay healthy... God bless you. I kiss you in faithful, fatherly love. Your Papa.36

Langer’s affectionate letter is a rich historical source. It alludes not only to some of the themes that have been analyzed by historians, most saliently the complex issue of Jewish emigration from Germany, but primarily to the emotional world of Jewish men, in this case a Jewish husband, who expressed his eternal gratitude to his wife who had just died. The letter also reflects an evaluation of the emotional stages Jews went through. Living withdrawn and isolated from society, the couple in fact seems to have strengthened their emotional bonds. In this letter, it becomes strikingly clear that marriage was an important social institution for both Jewish men and women. Jewish men who tried to perform roles of being proper husbands under the excruciating circumstances of the Third Reich also benefited from being in such mutual relationships. Langer makes no secret in his letter about the sense of happiness and contentment that he had gained from his marriage as long as it lasted during the Nazi era. Living together and supporting one another, especially between 1933 and 1941, even if not in material terms, provided meaning to both partners more than ever. In the Third Reich, marriage grew to become an essential part of Jewish men’s identities and a sensitive coping mechanism for survival. As Willy Cohn noted in October 1941:

Today we have been married for eighteen years. The years have passed quickly. They have brought us joy and they have brought us sorrows. But such is married life and Trudi has been a very good partner in marriage. We have brought up five children who will carry on for us when we are gone.37

37 Cohn, Breslau Diaries, 383.
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To be considered a man, it was not sufficient to have reached adulthood, learned a profession and acquired the economic means to provide for oneself. Respected men, Jewish and non-Jewish, were also expected to settle down, get married and have children. In the 19th century, as in earlier and later periods, fatherhood was essential to masculinity according to John Tosh, because “it so markedly contributed to a man’s immediate social standing. It lent greater substance to his role as sustainer and protector of family dependents.”

Walter Erhart speaks of fatherhood and masculinity that are both acted out and coordinated in numerous individual practices but, at the same time, are represented and structured along master narratives. Such master narratives provide a template for fatherly behavior. According to the psychologist Luigi Zoja, such narratives must be learned in the course of men’s lives, so that they can assume a parental role that, unlike mothers, men have not received from nature.

At various points in this study, I have touched on German-Jewish fathers. Many of the German-Jewish men who identified themselves as World War I veterans were fathers; Jewish

38 A shortened version of this sub-chapter was presented at the 41st German Studies Association Conference in Atlanta, October 6, 2017. I thank the engaged audience and their stimulating feedback.
41 Zoja further argues that “the father differs from the mother who brings into the world of human life a condition which already in animal life was fully affirmed and omnipresent as the principal premise of survival… The father is a program… Even if we limit our attention to the animals that evolved most recently – the mammals – females and mothers in the sphere of zoology have always been one and the same thing. The females know how to behave like mothers. Male mammals on the other hand, have almost always been simply males, and nothing more, without at all being fathers. In hundreds of millions of years of zoological history, it is only in the human species and only in the spans of the last few tens or hundreds of thousands of years, that one can descry a condition of fatherhood. Its construction received no assistance from any previous or corresponding instinct.” See Luigi Zoja, The Father: Historical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives, trans. Henry Martin (London: Brunner-Routledge, 2001), 12.
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men who struggled to retain their socio-economic positions and to provide for their families, were, in many cases, fathers. But Jewish fathers have been the objects rather than subjects of my analysis so far, as men being remembered, interpreted and observed by their wives and children. Jewish fathers as independent agents and their distinct experiences in relation to fatherhood in the Third Reich so far have not been the subject of detailed historical scrutiny. Yet, as John Tosh put it, “it is necessary to put more attention to the documentary evidence produced by fathers themselves.”

a) Fathers as Protectors

Closely related to their roles as husbands, Jewish men as fathers tried to adhere to norms and expectations that were synchronic to that of husbands but that were at the same time distinct. One aspect pertained to the protector role: as heads of their homes, Jewish men had internalized the cultural expectation that extended the protective grip over their spouses to their children.

The evidence suggests that many Jewish fathers in the mid-1930s were inclined to encourage their children to emigrate rather than stay in Germany. This was for instance the case for families that had shared Zionist convictions and saw the building of a Jewish state in Palestine as an attractive option. Josef Zwienicki (b. 1892) requested from the Office for Economic Aid (Zentralstelle für Wirtschaftshilfe) of the Jewish Community in Bremen financial aid for his son’s two-year hachschara (preparation), a Zionist program for Jewish youth to prepare for their emigration to Palestine.

42 The only one I know is a paper presented by Beate Kosmala, “Jüdische Väter zwischen Ohnmacht und Überlebenskampf,” Paper presented at Carlebach Conference, Hamburg 2014. The only other studies related to fathers in the Third Reich and the Holocaust are by Anna-Madeleine Halkes-Carey, who devoted one chapter of her dissertation to non-German-Jewish fathers during the Holocaust, and by Beth Carney, who based her dissertation on Nazi fathers in the SS.
43 Tosh, “Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood,” 60.
44 Josef Zwienicki, “Brief an die Zentralstelle,” Zwienicki Family Papers, USHMM, AC 2005.122.1
Yet, it was quite uncommon for parents to send their children abroad prior to the pogroms of 1938. Only, when antisemitic discrimination and violence culminated in 1938 and Jewish men were arrested, many overcame their reluctance to emigrate and reacted to this unexpected eruption of violence by re-evaluating their families’ and children’s future. In a situation of acute helplessness and men’s physical absence from their homes in cases of arrest, numerous Jewish parents decided that due to the fathers’ exposed vulnerability and insecure future, it was time for their children to get out of Germany.

As I have suggested above, the question of emigration was gendered, with many Jewish men in the early years of the Third Reich being especially hesitant to give up their military honor and work achievements. When Jewish men considered emigration more seriously in the late 1930s, often acceding to their wives’ pressure, many found themselves on a waiting list for obtaining visas to foreign countries. In such a situation, Jewish fathers, together with their wives or single-handedly, sometimes decided to expedite their children’s emigration through various means, such as the Kindertransporte, programs designed by foreign aid agencies to facilitate the immediate emigration of Jewish refugee children from Germany.

Otto Kollisch of Baden in Austria recorded in his memoir soon after Kristallnacht:

I tried everything to get out of Germany. In the meantime, I registered my children for an action to England at the Kultusgemeinde, where they promised me that at least the older boy, 6 years old, could go in January to England.\footnote{Otto Kollisch, \textit{Diary}, Peter Kollisch Collection, LBINY AR10717, 26.}

Also in 1938, Hermann Pineas (b. 1892) registered his son with the Youth Aliyah (Hebrew for immigration) Program, founded in 1933, that sponsored and organized the emigration of Jewish youth to Palestine. Pineas was racked with guilt after signing his son up for this project as the program was based on hard manual labor and an agricultural lifestyle in Palestine, a “trade” for
which his son had shown no interest at all.\textsuperscript{46} Yet, in this situation of perceived encroaching danger to the family’s livelihood, Pineas deemed his son’s safety more important than his son’s possible future profession. Born to a non-Jewish mother but raised Jewish (and considered Jewish by the government), Hans Alfred Rosenthal (b. 1924) remembered that when his father returned from a concentration camp months after Kristallnacht, his father and his uncle both immediately left for Shanghai, likely anticipating more violence against them and other Jewish men. As his father deemed the tropical weather and unsanitary conditions in Asia not suitable for his wife and child, however, prior to his own departure he registered his son for a hachschara program.\textsuperscript{47} It was his way of making sure his child was safe while also taking care of himself.

With children leaving first and parents staying behind in Germany, the latter were not spared continued anxiety. For fathers, being distanced from their children was a painful situation as they were no longer able to conform to the protector role. Erich Frey recalled in his diary in 1941:

\begin{quote}
Our worries began immediately after your departure, Miriam. We believed you were already in Palestine and then the war started. The Palestine Office informed us only that your group was well but had not landed yet in Haifa.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

Parents suffering from separation from their children was one thing, but the ensuing concerns following the separation, as Frey’s diary entry demonstrates, was another. The helplessness and inability to intervene on behalf of their children’s safety was a troubling experience for many Jewish parents and especially for fathers who had adhered to an image of the shielding protector but who were now reduced to a state of powerlessness and inactivity.

\textsuperscript{46} Hermann Pineas, \textit{Memoirs}, LBINY, ME502 MM4 MM61, 9.
\textsuperscript{47} Hans Alfred Rosenthal, Video Interview 1996, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation.
\textsuperscript{48} Frey, \textit{Diaries}, 5.
Though emigration turned into an ever-pressing issue in 1938, some Jewish parents had started to contemplate moving in 1933. For Jewish families who had lived in smaller towns or the countryside, where social relations were more intimate and communal and avoiding harassment by Nazi neighbors or in schools was more of a challenge, moving into a city such as Berlin seemed to be a sensible choice, also because cities offered Jewish families more opportunities to find employment. Jewish masculinity could thus be upheld by simultaneously finding employment in a city and conforming to the protector image. Inge Deutschkron remembered how her family, who already lived in Berlin, moved to a different district in 1933 where the neighbors would not know their religious affiliation. It was also a smaller apartment, a condition that reflected the reduced assets of her unemployed father.\footnote{Inge Deutschkron, \textit{Ich trug den gelben Stern} 2nd ed. (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik), 19.} Carl Schwabe decided to move his son from his hometown Hanau to nearby Frankfurt. Schwabe later described how hard it had been for Jewish children in Nazi Germany and how his son had been suffering in school from discrimination.\footnote{Schwabe, \textit{Memoirs}, 56.} As emigration was not yet considered or seemed unrealistic, a move into a bigger city where anonymity could be guaranteed and where a larger number of Jews lived was thus an appealing option for Jewish parents and a pragmatic means by which fathers could perform the protector role.

While migration within Germany always remained an option, more and more Jewish families recognized that obtaining immigration papers for foreign countries was turning into a less and less feasible option. Yet, emigration from Germany would constitute a concerted effort by German Jews to stay together as a family. It was one of the few options for Jewish men to perform the protector role. As the (self-perceived) patriarch over his family, Alfred Elbau’s father (b. 1881) was determined only to emigrate from Germany if the entire family was willing.
to move, including his adult children and their spouses.\textsuperscript{51} Jewish men’s belief in their roles as protectors in instances such as these is palpable. Elbau’s father felt he needed to adhere to a gender norm that expected him to ensure the physical safety (\textit{Unversehrtheit}) of his whole family. He likely felt that if the family stayed together, he could better realize the survival of the entire family unit; if it got divided and stretched over different continents, he felt he would no longer be able to enact the protector role.

Elbau’s case echoes that of numerous other Jewish families and couples that faced similar predicaments. His role as the protector remained largely undefined, and in his writings he never explicitly specified his role as protector patriarch. Moreover, in 1937, there still seemed to be limited danger for the family as the Elbaus were an upper-class family and the children and in-laws had managed to keep their jobs. Regardless of how real or imagined the Nazi threat was, however, what matters for the historian is how Elbau translated the cultural norm into social reality. Acting as the captain who leaves the sinking ship last, his manifestation of proper gender roles had the tangible result that the entire family in 1937 started the laborious yet successful process of emigration.

In cases when Jewish parents left Germany without their children, and even if these had long reached adulthood, Jewish fathers as the supposed guardians could still display serious concerns over their children’s well-being. Expressing emotional concerns was not the sole arena of women. According to Klaus-Michael Bogdal, bourgeois masculine identity had become bound to the ideal of the family man in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, with proximity and intimacy arising within the confines of the nuclear family.\textsuperscript{52}

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The fifty-eight-year old Salomon Riemer (b. 1880), after having settled in Palestine together with his wife in 1936, sent the following letter to his sister-in-law, who lived either in Britain or North America:

Tel Aviv, October 1, 1938

My dear, faithful Sister-in-law,

Herr Max Slaten was so kind as to forward your address to me. We have not written each other in over three decades, and I was very pleased to hear that you are still alive. Hopefully you are healthy and doing well. In eight days, I will be married for twenty-eight years and eight days after that I will turn fifty-eight years old. I have three children. One son is twenty-seven and in Berlin. His name is Werner. The second’s name is Herbert, twenty-six; he is married and lives in Antwerp. Then I have a little girl (Töchterchen), who is eighteen and a half. For two and a half years, my wife and I have been living in Palestine. I am subsisting from the sale of coffee, cacao and tea… It is hard but I am managing to provide (Lebensunterhalt aufbringen)... I would be immensely grateful if you could help us regarding my oldest son. Palestine is currently not allowing anyone to enter. Germany is a hell and Jews are being persecuted innocently. They are not allowed to live, are not allowed to work, and if things continue the way they are, Jews will vanish due to starvation. My wife Minna and I are very much concerned for our boy and don’t know, due to all this excitement and trouble, what to do. Believe me, Dear Pauline, when Werner sends us a letter, our hearts tremble and we have sleepless nights. Perhaps you can give us some advice and get into touch with people who can do something… An immediate solution is required if the boy is not to perish (untergehen) in Berlin… Heartfelt greetings from your loving brother-in-law Salomon.53

Riemer’s letter provides valuable insights into the emotional state of Jewish parents and especially Jewish fathers for a number of reasons. First, in a somewhat expected, generic manner, Riemer refers to his profession and the source of income as a display of bourgeois masculinity. His status as income-maker and head of a household are codified. Second, Riemer emphatically echoes his understanding of the male protector role. Though his wife is equally worried about her son (and, possibly more directly related by blood to the addressee of the

letter), it was the father’s task to make sure that his children were physically safe and sound. Though his son was well into adulthood, and despite the considerable geographic distance that lay between father and “child” and despite having no practical solutions at hand, Riemer still felt responsible for his son’s well-being.

As many families decided to stay together prior to their emigration, or had to wait for emigration papers, Jewish fathers had to confront the predicament of somehow fulfilling the protector role in Nazi Germany while facing an uncertain future. For Jewish fathers, who were not able to send their children abroad first, being a guardian thus turned into a challenge. On the day of Kristallnacht, November 10, 1938, Hans Berger saw the burning synagogue in his hometown when he decided to drive to his children’s school to assess their safety. Even as Jewish men were being arrested en masse, Berger found the time to make the arrangements that day for his children to be picked up and safely returned to their home.54 It was his act of fulfilling his role as a father. Sigmund Weltlinger (1886-1974) recalled that in 1938, “I brought my daughter to piano lessons in the afternoon because I thought it was not safe for her to go alone.”55 The safety concerns were based on a gendered tradition that made Jewish fathers take an active role in the family by trying to maintain a level of comfort and security for their children.

Yet, despite seeking immigration visas, there was little that Jewish fathers could do to protect their families in the Third Reich, a striking example of the undermining of their fatherhood roles and marginalization of masculinity. Joseph Adler, in a reflection written only weeks after the pogroms, recalled that when a non-Jewish acquaintance of his offered to take

54 Hans Berger, Memoirs, LBINY, ME46 MM7, 1.
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his children temporarily to her place for them to be safe, Adler grudgingly accepted. As a father, he had realized his limited options:

And if they come to pick me up and shoot me tomorrow morning -- What can I do about it? Shall I flee tonight, leaving everything behind, without a passport, without possessions, and dependent upon the charity of strangers? And is it all possible with wife and two children to cross the border on the black market?\(^{56}\)

Adler’s disillusionment and despair over being the decision-maker and head of the family is striking. Sending his own children away in such an extraordinary situation was perceived as a final option, yet no less embarrassing. Berger’s and Adler’s reactions demonstrate that safety was a major concern for Jewish parents, both mothers and fathers. Jewish mothers were no less concerned than their husbands and Jewish mothers were no less active in trying to bring their children into safety.\(^{57}\) But as part of a gendered cultural catalogue of norms and expectations, Jewish men were primarily affected by the pressure to perform the expected protector role. Though there were several means that Jewish fathers could, under certain circumstances, make use of, such as relocating their children out of Germany or to parts in Germany that were deemed safer, as a whole the means to conform to and display their gendered behavior of being the protector were increasingly limited. As a result, Jewish fathers experienced their loss of patriarchal power not simply as Jews, but as Jewish men.\(^{58}\)

\(^{56}\) Joseph Adler, *The Family of Joseph and Marie Adler. Jews in Germany, German Jews in America*, LBINY, ME971 MM21, 73.

\(^{57}\) Marion Kaplan has demonstrated this point well in her book *Between Dignity and Despair*.

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b) Jewish Fathers and Family Life

Jewish father roles in the Third Reich were transformed, in addition to the curtailment of the protector role, in other ways which paralleled the situations of Jewish men as husbands. With rising unemployment, Jewish men took on a new and increasingly visible presence in the domestic sphere. As I have argued in the previous chapter, Jewish masculinities developed unevenly, with some Jewish men adapting depressive behaviors and even committing suicide, while for others their new lives opened new doors. Being at home not only had an impact on Jewish men’s self-understanding as former breadwinners or husbands, but also on family life leading to fathers and children spending more time together and building a new intimacy of trust.

The historiography of fatherhood has long focused on two models of fatherhood in the past: the absent father who spent much of his time at work or places of male socialization (pubs and clubs) and the emotionless, authoritative father who expected his children to excel at school and work, a father who wanted to harden and prepare his children for adult life and expected obedience. In either model, historians have assigned little space for an exchange of signs of love and affection between father and child. Historians long assumed that children in the 19th and early 20th century did not grow up with fathers who devoted much time and affection to their children.

Certainly many Germans endorsed these models. In the militarized society of Imperial Germany, as Karen Hagemann has shown, tough manhood became the social ideal:

Schoolbooks and boys’ literature promoted the explicit training and veneration of heroes. Male youths were reminded over and over again of the model of the ‘boy heroes’ of the wars of liberation… [I]ncreasing value [was placed] on a ‘manly-military-habitus’ in the everyday peacetime lives of adult middle-class men… The ‘civilian’ ideal of masculine ‘valor’ was replaced by a military-combat-readiness, characterized by discipline. This
is evident... in the growing influence of nationalist and militarist men’s associations.\textsuperscript{59}

In the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, and more so under Nazi rule, (young) men were expected to adopt a military canon of values like discipline, heroism and steadfastness and to publicly display them if they wanted to be considered as true men.\textsuperscript{60} Such discursive norms became part of the fascist pedagogy in the Third Reich, in school and outside (such as in the Hitler Youth) and were accepted by a generation of (middle-class) German fathers, many of whom had continued to identify themselves as military men of the imperial era. In their own childhood, many had been raised by authoritarian fathers whose principles still mirrored the values of Wilhelmine militarism.\textsuperscript{61} In contemporary publications, writers promoted the image of the soldierly, disciplined male who was steadfast and strong in contrast to images of the emotional, feeble woman. In this ideological polarization of gender characters, there was no space for sensitive men.\textsuperscript{62} A manual published by the SA thus wrote:

\textsuperscript{59} Hagemann, “German Heroes: The Cult of the Death for the Fatherland,” 128-129. Bryan Ganaway also refers to the dominance of soldier toys in Wilhelmine Germany though the author argues that there other, competing discourses. Commonly, boys also enjoyed learning and experimenting with other toys such as chemistry kits or cars that allegedly underlined men’s natural propensity for things scientific. I think that these two dominant models of childrearing for boys, however, were complementary. In the Third Reich, discourses on militarism and technology and science were equally assigned to the realms of men, many of whom not only aspired to join the military, but more specifically motorized units (the Luftwaffe; tank battalions) where they would get into touch with machinery. See Bryan Ganaway, “Consuming Masculinity: Toys and Boys in Wilhelmine Germany,” in \textit{Edinburgh German Yearbook Volume 2: Masculinities in German Culture}, eds Sarah Colvin & Peter Davies (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 97-112.


\textsuperscript{62} Till van Rahden argues that only after 1945 and as part of West German democratisation, did churches and other moral institutions start to advocate for a radical change in fatherhood images that deviated from the previous practise of paternal authority that had demanded strict obedience and discipline from their children. See Till van Rahden, “Fatherhood, Rechristianization, and the Quest for Democracy in Postwar West Germany,” in \textit{Raising Citizens in the “Century of the Child,”} ed. Dirk Schuhmann (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 141–164. See also
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[It is] the task to guide our healthy manhood systematically to military training [Wehrertüchtigung] and military aptitude [Wehrfähigkeit]. Not every well-grown and healthy young man is suitable for the military [wehrtüchtig]. It requires the shaping [Ausprägung] of his attitude [Haltung] in a very particular direction of will [Willensrichtung].

The construct of the authoritative/absent fatherhood model, however, has been recently questioned by historians who have revealed in their studies that historians too often have uncritically conflated cultural norms and social realities. John LaRossa thus argues for the distinction between the culture and conduct of fatherhood. The first refers to norms, values, beliefs and expressive symbols that fathers were expected to follow and the attitudes and sentiments people had towards fathers; the second connotes routine activities by fathers, “trying to act fatherly.” While historians have often focused on cultures of fatherhood that might have prescribed proper fatherly behaviors as being distanced and strict, the conduct of fatherhood


Handbuch der SA (Berlin: Verlag Offene Worte, 1939), 125.

Gunilla Budde showed that in late 19th-century Germany, there was a growing distance between fathers and their children. Often, fathers were viewed as strong disciplinarians with high expectations and lack of emotions toward their children, who often did not mind their fathers’ absence at home. Budde acknowledges, however, that in their writings, men demonstrated signs of affection and care. Also in the 1990s, John Tosh triggered some major interest and debate with his thesis of a “flight from domesticity” in 19th-century Britain which he since, however, has relativized. He claims that there was a growing distance between work and home, yet in their leisure time, fathers spent more time at home. Ann-Charlotte Trepp and Rebekka Habermas have both demonstrated that emotion and affection were more common as part of fatherhood in the 18th/19th-century German middle class. John LaRossa in his pioneering work on fatherhood in the 19th and 20th centuries also argues that fathers were not one-dimensional unemotional/unaffectionate figures they sometimes have been made out to have been. Fathers emerge as men who valued and managed to maintain relations with wives and children that were both affectionate and harmonious. In her study on Wehrmacht soldiers, furthermore, Hester Vaizey shows how affectionate even the German men were who were supposed to exhibit hard masculinity and act fearless and emotionless. See Gunilla Budde, Auf dem Weg ins Bürgerleben: Kindheit und Erziehung in deutschen und englischen Bürgerfamilien, 1840 bis 1914 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); John Tosh, “Home and Away: The Flight from Domesticity in late 19th-century England Revisited,” Gender & History 27, no. 3 (2015): 561–575; Ann-Charlotte Trepp, Sanfte Männlichkeit und selbständige Weiblichkeit: Männer und Frauen im Hamburger Bürgertum zwischen 1770-1840 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Habermas, Frauen, Männer und Bürgerums; John LaRossa, “The Historical Study of Fatherhood: theoretical and methodological considerations,” in Fatherhood in Late Modernity: Cultural Images, Social Practices, Structural Frames, eds. Mechtild Oechsle, Ursula Müller and Sabine Hess (Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2012), 37-58; Vaizey, “Husbands and Wives.”

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has received less attention. Yet much evidence points to German fathers, Jewish and non-Jewish, to have demonstrated interest in and affection for their children in the late 19th and early 20th century. Even in the Third Reich, as Amy Beth Carney demonstrated in her study of fatherhood among SS soldiers, the Nazi state advocated for fathers to show affection and actively support mothers in infant care by changing diapers or pushing a stroller, even in soldierly uniform, with no repercussions in terms of undermining their masculinity and soldierly dignity. 66

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to analyze any discrepancies between the cultural concept of authoritative fathers in the Third Reich, who were expected to drill their children to be obedient, and the social, private practice of fathers who were affectionate to their children. The sources analyzed for this dissertation point overwhelmingly to the model of the affectionate (Jewish) father. An abundance of evidence underpins the practice of Jewish men openly acknowledging the emotions that they developed toward their children and expressed in writing, even if only in private places such as in diaries. My evidence thus supports Rebekka Habermas’ well-founded critique that cultural ideals should not be conflated with historical social practices. 67 Furthermore, Jewish historiography has shown that in pre-imperial German-Jewish bourgeois culture, fathers were expected to participate in raising their children with tenderness and devotion. According to Baader, many fathers strove to be involved in the raising of children; contemporary Jewish educators and ideologues certainly advised them to do so. 68

67 Habermas, Männer und Frauen des Bürgertums, 11.
68 Baader, Gender, Judaism and Bourgeois Culture, 55.
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Furthermore, traditional rabbinical advice had long praised feminine virtues and behaviors as part of Jewish masculinity. And even though in the 19th century, notions of military masculinity gradually undermined the relevance and importance of the effeminate Jewish man, in the private sphere the model of the affectionate, tender father was commonly practiced, and as the following discussion will demonstrate, it could smoothly co-exist under Nazi oppression, or paradoxically even be strengthened. First, I will first analyze the domesticated Jewish man in his altered role as a father who spent more time with children and developed more intimacy with them; then I will analyze some of the agonies Jewish men endured as fathers.

In the Third Reich, Jewish fathers spent more time at home and were thus in closer contact with their children. Yet, mocking images of the Jewish Hausmann had a long tradition. Preceding the 1930s, antisemites such as the social reformer and pedagogue Hans Blüher (1888-1955), prominent member and promoter of the popular Wandervogel youth movement in 1912 launched numerous tirades against Jewish men. Blüher had preached that Jewish men were too domesticated and tribal (sippenhaft), as well as too soft and effeminate in their physical outlook and behavior and criticized them for spending too much time at home with their families. In the misogynistic and antisemitic critiques against modernism and the indulgent city lifestyles of the bourgeoisie, reformers like Blüher in the early 20th century used the effeminized Jewish male as an archetypical depiction of all social evil and juxtaposed him to non-Jewish men who

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69 Ibid., 217.
70 Some German-Jewish thinkers and theologians internalized and in fact adopted some of these antisemitic criticisms, yet turned them into distinct and laudable Jewish traits that defined Judaism. Jewish men’s family-orientation thus were praised by Jewish rabbis. See Benjamin B. Baader, “Jewish Difference and the Feminine Spirit of Judaism in mid-19th century Germany,” in Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History, eds. Benjamin M Baader, Sharon Gillerman & Paul Lerner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).
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properly engaged with and socialized in the public sphere that was reserved for men, such as military associations, clubs and fraternities.71 Jewish men, on the other hand, were demarcated as un-soldierly and discursively placed in the domestic sphere where they lived the lives of women.

Such antisemitic discourses on the culture of Jewish masculinity had little to do with the actual conduct of Jewish masculinity, however. Instead, Jewish men’s lives closely resembled those of their gentile counterparts. As Baader points out, in the late 19th century Jewish men spent more time outside the home, conforming to the ruling middle-class standards of conduct:

[Jewish] contemporaries elevated motherhood and raised doubts about fathers’ aptitudes for deeply bonding with the children… Men… who had to divide their time and their energy between public and domestic duties were “occupied too much and too fully outside of the [domestic] sanctuary” to provide full moral and religious guidance to their children.72

As various studies on Jewish acculturation in Germany in the 19th century have shown, German-Jewish men were considerably integrated into German economic, social and cultural life and devoted much of their time to participating in the market economy, in municipal and civic affairs and in male-exclusive associations.73 It was in the Third Reich that Jewish fathers were abruptly faced with a surplus of free time and used it to stay at home and thus come into closer contact with their children. While Aryan men (and to some degree women) were supposed to

72 Baader, Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture, 212 & 55-56.
73 Till van Rahden showed how Jewish men in Breslau around the turn of the century had been so well-integrated that they not only were elected as city councilors but even achieved higher posts such as mayor or heads of the chamber of commerce and other prestigious positions of respectable social standing. See Till van Rahden, Jews and Other Germans: Civil Society, Religious Diversity, and Urban Politics in Breslau, 1860–1925 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).
spend increasing amounts of time outside the home in various Nazi organizations, for Jewish parents it was the opposite. To most Germans, fascism presented itself in a light of reinvigorating a nationalist euphoria, galvanizing Germans to participate in a movement that emphasized images of agility, force and vitality and that were lived and experienced in the public sphere. In stark contrast to this “Aryan” public life, Jewish men withdrew into the quiet, private sphere. Alfred Meyer (b. 1920) dryly recalled that his father, an attorney by profession, prior to 1933 had spent little time with him and his brothers growing up:

Only in the Third Reich did he spend more time [with us] because his job as an attorney resulted in more free time. He devoted much attention to his children’s education, including learning languages.

With their available time, Jewish fathers could spend this time with their children in a variety of ways. They would walk with their children to the city park, or, as Willi Cohn recorded in this diary, alleviate their wives’ work pressure by bringing their children to kindergarten.

In 1941, he noted:

Yesterday went for a walk in the sun with Tamara [his daughter, b. 1938] and bought something at the automat. This is the only happiness I can provide the children, going with them to the automat… the only one that currently has sweets. The children of today have become very modest in their wants.

The increased periods of time fathers spent together with their children meant an increase in intimacy, trust and friendship. On a walk with his other daughter in March 1940, Cohn noted:

Went for a walk in the afternoon with Susanne [b. 1932]. When I walk alone with her, she talks more openly. She told me that she often cries at night thinking about her brothers and sister.

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75 Alfred Meyer, *My attitude toward Germany and being Jewish*, LBINY AR25075, Box 1, Folder 1, p 2.
76 Cohn, *Breslau Diaries*, 382.
77 Ibid., 382.
78 Cohn, *Breslau Diaries*, 345. The case of the Cohn family, though Willy Cohn’s two oldest sons managed to get out of Germany in time, is a particular moving case. The former teacher was an affectionate father and husband and gifted diary writer. Together with his wife and two young daughters, he was deported in late November 1941 from Breslau to Kovno (then Kaunas), where they were machine-gunned. The diaries’ editor Norbert Conrads
Fritz Goldberg (b. 1923) recalled how his father in the 1930s took him to nearby public baths following the closure of the city pool for Jews in his hometown of Altenburg. In his car, Goldberg senior would drive his son into smaller towns where no Jews lived and thus no similar antisemitic prohibitions had yet been implemented.\textsuperscript{79} It is one of the paradoxes of the social history of Jewish life in the Third Reich that while adult Jews were becoming more desperate, some children in fact remembered parts of their childhoods in the Third Reich in a rather positive light, as quality time spent with the \textit{entire} family.

While increased and unprecedented socialization with children could transform Jewish fathers into private persons who could better extend their love and trust to their children, they also continued in their bourgeois endeavor to further their children’s development through education, a central and defining element of the German-Jewish middle class.\textsuperscript{80} Furthering their children’s education was striking proof of how Jewish fathers not only remained active agents, seeking to engage in “productive labor,” but also how they envisioned a future existence in Germany or abroad, thus making it imperative for their children to be better prepared for the post-Nazi era. Victor Klemperer observed how several Jewish male acquaintances had started teaching their children:

Aris said he is teaching his two children, the eldest is nine, himself, so that afterward, they would immediately be able to enter a secondary school. Likewise, Eisenmann senior told me, that he teaches his nine-year old Lisel himself. The ban on schooling is a dreadful disgrace. The Jews are simply supposed to sink down into a state of illiteracy. But the Nazis will not achieve that.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{79} Fritz Goldberg, \textit{Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach dem 30. Januar 1933}, LBINY ME190, 2.

\textsuperscript{80} “The Jewish family gained in importance as the place where morality, religiosity and \textit{Bildung} were cultivated and imparted to the next generation.” See Baader, \textit{Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture}, 56.

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Even absent children received fatherly advice and solemn reminders to take their studies seriously. As Alexandra Garbarini has shown, Jewish fathers as much as mothers engaged in long-distance parenting during the years of the Holocaust.\(^{82}\) In many letters sent in 1939 to his son Erich, who had emigrated to the United States, the lawyer Albert Rose reminded his son to stay focused.

"Dear Erich, You write that you are going to be in Berkeley by the end of May. When does the next semester begin there? Do not waste any time because you have no time to waste. In particular, do not go to New York. You can achieve more in Berkeley than in New York... Your ambition should be to start and finish your studies in Berkeley as soon as possible, and I am of the opinion that you cannot get to Berkeley fast enough. Who knows what is going to happen in the meantime... If I were you, I would pull all strings to get to Berkeley as fast as possible. Think about it again... In the meantime, learn English, English and again English.\(^{83}\)

In a letter that soon followed the first one, on February 14, 1939, Rose demandingly inquired:

Are you learning English? Have you received the geography book about the United States and the technical lexicon? I am also going to send you an English-American dictionary which will certainly be of help to you.\(^{84}\)

Other fathers started teaching their children as a way of fighting boredom while also making some money on the side and maintaining a sense of usefulness.\(^{85}\) As these examples demonstrate, Jewish fathers’ unemployment could have a positive side-effect, in a paradoxical way, resulting from their new time that they could spend with their children. Children provided them an amusing pastime but also relayed to them an emotional sense of belonging and more importantly, a sense of purpose. Jewish masculinity in the Third Reich could divert into the role

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\(^{84}\)Ibid., Inv. Nr. 2013/430/130.

\(^{85}\)Inge Deutschkron remembered how her father was teaching foreign students German under the table. Even after the war began, Yakob Langer’s father taught literature to 14 and 15-year-old Jewish boys to further their education. See Deutschkron, *Ich trug den gelben Stern*, 19; “Letter by Yakob Langer’s father to his son,”
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of the entertaining and mentor father, a reciprocal relationship that benefitted both father and child. Yet, dependencies in this father-child relationship also began to shift. Though both father and children benefitted from each other’s support, it was Jewish fathers who become increasingly dependent on their children for their own psychological and physical well-being. As the former lawyer Kurt Rosenberg (1900-1977) pointed out in his diary:

I belong to the kind of people who are suffering from tiredness that appears when the path in front of you melts away [zerinnen]. The feeling of safety [Geborgenheit] of your own home and the harmony with wives and children are the only and decisive counterweights.

To some fathers, like Rosenberg, their children heightened a will to persevere, to make it through the Nazi years and prevent ending their lives prematurely. Willy Cohn noted in his diary on May 5, 1933: “What I would really like to do is just give it up, if I didn’t have a modicum of a sense of responsibility and weren’t thinking of my family.” Max Krakauer (1888-1965) who with his wife went illegally underground in 1942, defying Nazi deportation orders, had to change hiding places numerous times, being reliant on the goodwill of strangers. He remembered how tired and despondent both he and his wife had become after being transferred from one place to another. “Did this all still make sense? The thought of our only daughter in England pulled us up [hochreißen].” Instead of one-dimensionally performing the role of the supporter, Jewish fathers thus also discovered an ontological sustenance in their children. Even absent children could conjure up a stronger will to live in their fathers. Seeing their children again could comprise a life-inspiring survival method. In his diary-memoir written in 1939 and after having recently followed his two daughters to the United States, Max

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87 Cohn, Breslau Diaries, 9.
88 Max & Karoline Krakauer, Lichter im Dunkeln. Flucht und Rettung eines jüdischen Ehepaars im Dritten Reich (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1994), 67.
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Cohnreich (1882-1949) expressed gratitude to his children who helped him overcome his perceived failures:

Rutchen and Evchen, beside my wife, were and are giving me the fundamental reason for liking my life. My pride in my daughters, resulting from their success, equals my love for them, but surpasses its importance for my very existence. It is this pride that was and still is my greatest stimulus for every action or effort. It is this pride that on the one hand let’s forget me the defeats of my own life and on the other hand, convinces me that at least one goal of my striving has been reached, the happiness of my children.89

In a similar vein, the single parent Alfred Schwerin (b. 1892) was quite moved when he saw a letter of gratitude from his daughter, whom Schwerin had managed to send to France in 1939 with the help of a children’s refugee organization. On her last day at home, his daughter wrote the following letter:

Dear Papa,
I thank you for everything you have done for me and hope that you are going to be alright while I am gone. You shall long live under this roof. I wish you all the best. Many heartfelt greetings and kisses from your Ellen.90

Schwerin recalled that when he saw the letter, he kissed his sleeping child and took the letter. “It weighed more than gold and jewels,” he recalled in his 1944 memoir.91 It was such signs of affection, at times openly expressed and acknowledged between father and child and at other times relegated to the realm of diaries and retrospective memoirs, that helped Jewish fathers (and children) to better endure times of hardship. Children’s love for their parents could constitute an important counterweight and inspiration to these men.

As previously pointed out, Jewish fathers in their self-perceived provider and protector roles primarily pursued their children’s well-being. Not being able to fulfil this principle of

89 Max Cohnreich, Diaries, USHMM, AC 2006.151, Entry February 9, 1939.
90 Alfred Schwerin, Memoirs, LBINY, ME593 MM69, 103. Trans. S. Huebel.
91 Ibid, 103. Schwerin, a former merchant and concentration camp prisoner was re-united with his daughter in 1940 following an illegal border crossing into Switzerland.
fatherhood was a painful experience and constituted a challenge to Jewish hegemonic masculinity. Particularly due to reduced incomes with fewer financial means available, Jewish parents were increasingly unable to provide their children the material resources as they had done previously. Special treats as signs of parental love became rare. Hans Winterfeldt remembered how as a young boy he had wished for a bicycle for Christmas. His father’s business, a general store in a small town in Brandenburg, was doing so poorly that his father was unable to purchase the bike. His father had even contacted the manufacturer directly, hoping for a reduced price, but even this, Hans recalled, was too much for his father, who felt deeply sorry.92 Similarly unable to purchase any gifts for his children, Willy Cohn confessed to his diary: “I am short on money… It is very difficult for a father when he is unable to do what he would like to do.”93 Bourgeois concepts of work masculinity and notions of Jewish fatherhood patently overlapped. Bereft of incomes, Jewish providers could also not entirely fulfill their fatherly roles.

The inability of Jewish fathers to provide material happiness and their ensuing pain as emasculated fathers, however, was minor compared to the pain fathers together with their wives experienced when they had to separate from their children. Already in late 1935, Hertha Nathorff bluntly noted into her diary: “Poor parents… How terrible these transports are… From now on, their lives will consist of waiting for letters from their children.”94

From a Jewish father’s perspective, while the loss of the provider and protector role might have been humiliating and painful, his separation from his children was certainly the most excruciating one.95 Numerous accounts encapsulate the pain of fathers relating to their

92 Hans Winterfeldt, USC Digital Video Testimony Archive.
93 Cohn, Breslau Diaries, 205.
94 Nathorff, Tagebuch, 76.
95 See also Amkraut, Between Home and Homeland Youth Aliyah
Forced separation from their children. Otto Kollisch remembered on the day of his children’s Kindertransport:

For our children, the leaving was rather fun, because of all the other children, and we were kind of happy about that, that the children did not feel any psychological pain. We also pulled ourselves extremely together when we said good-bye, so that they couldn’t tell our sad hearts. When the train pulled out of the hall, hardly anyone could withhold their tears… We drove home depressed. Once we arrived here, we really could feel the absence of the children because of the sudden stillness, and tears came down my wife’s and my cheeks.96

Kollisch’s excerpt is intriguing as it evinces how both mother and father experienced their painful separation from their children. While references to women in tears and crying might not surprise nor challenge cultural gender norms (but in fact reinforce images of emotional femininity), overt expressions of agony by Jewish men such as by Kollisch do. They deviate, as LaRossa has argued, from the culture of fatherhood that foresaw a type of tough masculinity, according to which men were to act unwaveringly and withstand any adversity without shedding a tear. As this study demonstrates, the conduct of Jewish fatherhood paints a different picture.

One the most revealing sources that underline the pain Jewish fathers endured as fathers is Willy Cohn’s diary. Over the course of several years, he expressed his suffering in being forcefully separated from his children:

April 18, 1933: Wölf [his eldest son, b. 1915] is gone now. It was a very difficult farewell. But a father is not eager to commit to paper or express how he feels at such a moment.

October 6, 1933: Trudi went to see Sophie Kaim, who leads the Youth Aliyah, we got the forms. I decided quickly and filled out the forms. Registering can be withdrawn at any time but it keeps the door open. I would find separation from this son very difficult as well, but in these times, we must not be egoistic but think only of the future of our children.

96 Kollisch, Diary, Box 1, Folder 2, p. 34.
4. Jewish Husbands and Fathers

December 31, 1933: This year… For me personally, it was very painful to separate from my eldest son.

August 7, 1934: My separation from Wölfl weighs heavily on me, as does the shrinking prospect of me seeing him again in the foreseeable future. This feeling overwhelms me at night in particular. But none of this is of any help and we must simply endure it.

November 9, 1934: We received news from the Jewish youth assistance society that Ernst’s group will probably leave in December. And so the time draws ever nearer when the pain of separation will be upon me. Nonetheless, I know that the boy will be set free and have a future ahead of him. As a father one may not be selfish in any way.

December 8, 1934: It is always wonderful to see the pleasure in the children’s eyes… I was fearful after Wölf left. It is now almost three-quarters of a year since he has been gone, and unfortunately, I will be unable to meet him in St. Gallen at Christmas. I won’t have the money together.

December 18, 1934: I decided to travel to St Gallen after all since they granted me the necessary foreign currency. Felix Perle was good enough to lend 200 marks to finance the trip. I hope that I will be able to repay him over the course of January from receipts from my lecture tour. Exactly how much that will bring in I cannot tell at the moment. Nonetheless, a person must be willing incur risk to see his child again.

November 30, 1936: I have a great desire to see my children.

December 12, 1937: Wölfl and Ernst haven’t celebrated my birthday here for quite a few years, but I am grateful to G’d that they are doing well so far.

November 24, 1938: Efforts to find a place for Ruth and Susanne in Switzerland… We agreed immediately… What your hearts will endure if we must send out children away is something best not talked about. But that is not the point. The main thing is that the children be safe in case these things repeat, which could quickly happen again! The children look forward to the prospect.

March 4, 1939: Susannchen is seven years old today. The child is my heart’s consolation and my sunshine. I cannot imagine ever separating from her.

September 16, 1939: Ruth’s train will be leaving in fifteen minutes, Trudi took Susannchen with her to the train station. I stayed at home so as not to leave Tamara alone. It is hard to say what a person feels at such moments. It is as if everything has frozen up. Nonetheless, I must reconcile myself because it is in my child’s best interest. The tragedy of our times is that we must send her on her way completely alone much too early, but hopefully it is best for her.
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Footnote by the diaries’ editor: Ruth later wrote that her father stayed home because he would have found saying goodbye at the train station unbearable.

December 25, 1940: We gave Hanukah presents to Susanne and Tamara in the afternoon... [They] were very happy which makes all the work that we have done the whole year through worth it, just to see the happiness in our children’s eyes.  

Cohn’s affection for his children is palpable, and it is likely that he did not limit his love to the realm of the diary but treated his children lovingly in person. Cohn’s diary illustrates how torn fathers were when they had to separate from their children and how dependent they had become on their children’s well-being for their own well-being. Sigmund Weltlinger poignantly summed up how excruciating it was to depart from his children:

What it means for parents to separate from their children – often in the most tender age [zartesten Alter] – for an unknown period, perhaps for always, anyone can understand. When I returned from the concentration camp, I had to separate from my children. They departed, aged 15 and 17 with 10 Marks in their pockets into foreign lands [die Fremde]. Only many years later did we hear from one another, after they had thought us to be long dead. The heart-breaking scenes at the departures of children from their parents at the train stations, are the most terrible thing I have ever experienced. Most children never saw their parents again.

97 Cohn, Breslau Diaries, 6, 22, 31, 40, 48, 52, 53, 116, 164, 196, 240, 276, 338
Physically separating from their children in the late 1930s, as the above examples demonstrate, was a painful experience for both Jewish mothers and fathers. Perhaps even more excruciating was the final farewell to their children. During the war, Jewish parents, whose children often had left for overseas, sent their last (Red Cross) letters, made final diary entries that directly addressed their children, and sometimes wrote suicide notes, also addressed to their children. These writings reflected an awareness that they would never see their children again. In such situations with ambivalent emotions of anger, love, despair and calmness, Jewish fathers could not help but provide final advice to the children, a final practical and symbolic gesture.

The former lawyer Gustav Meyer (b. 1884) in his farewell letter prior to his and his wife’s deportation to Theresienstadt in March 1943, wrote to his three sons:

Let the picture of your parents, which you have taken with you in your spirit into foreign lands, be an example [Vorbild] for the organization of your own family lives. Do think often about us, when you are unsure, how to handle this or that problem! Keep tight among you the brotherly ties and help one another… We are thinking about you day and night and are keeping you in our memories as good, industrious [tüchtig] and affectionate children… Be dearly kissed from your Father. 99

Yakob Langer’s father, in his suicide note to his son, included several addresses of people his son could contact to ask for help once the war was over. 100 Erich Frey in his diary, addressing his overseas children, also included a number of names and addresses in case they ever needed help. These people were “very much obligated to me,” he stated. He also included tax information about his assets, prudently foreseeing legal issues of restitution in the postwar era. 101 Besides giving somber advice and reaching out to support their children via

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100 “Letter by Yakob Langer’s father to his son.” Trans. S. Huebel.
101 Frey, Diary, 36.
acquaintances, they also commonly used their diaries or letters as a medium to give an emotional farewell that carried a final element of fatherly loving advice. Erich Frey wrote:

Dear Beloved Children,

… Perhaps we may no longer be alive and that is not improbable in view of the happenings of the last year. Do not be sad then. Read calmly through this report, which I kept as factual and sober as possible and tell yourselves: thank God they have finished enduring. But you can believe us that we are attached to you with every fiber of our hearts and that we have only one wish for you: may you be healthy and happy. As far as we are concerned, our only wish is to see you again and to talk to at least one of you. We thus will be reassured that you are well and can look forward to a future that will be more beautiful and radiant than anything Jewry has ever experienced, even in its prime.\(^\text{102}\)

The final instruction not to mourn was, of course, hardly meant. Still, the fatherly hope to spare their children from future agony was certainly genuine.

**Conclusion:**

Losing status and respect in society as well as the means of income were all aggravated by the fact that Jewish men felt not only responsible for themselves but also for their wives and children, facing pressures to conform to gender norms that defined men, regardless of class, age or ethnicity, as breadwinners for and protectors of their families. James Bachner (b. 1922) recalled how emotionally unsettling the increasing constraints in 1938 had become for his father:

After we had boarded the train... Papa couldn’t contain himself and started crying like a child. We hugged each other lovingly and eventually, he regained his composure. Everything he had worked for all those years was gone. All his plans for our future had evaporated into thin air. Our family was torn apart and the immediate future depended upon finding refuge… with our [relatives] so that Mutti and Fred [his brother] could follow us.\(^\text{103}\)

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\(^{102}\) Ibid., 5-6.

I opened this chapter referring to established scholarship that has interpreted Jewish men as emasculated by the Nazis. Based on the postulated hypothesis that “Jewish men became despondent and unable to protect their families,” this chapter has sought to analyze in detail how Jewish men’s protector roles deteriorated, yet did not fully dissolve, and how, through multiple means, Jewish men sustained their masculine identities as husbands and fathers. Providing practical and symbolic protection, communicating affection and tenderness as well as offering guidance and mentoring advice were central elements to this identity construction from which Jewish husbands and fathers also reciprocally benefitted.

In their attempts to cope with the variety of Nazi challenges, German-Jewish men relied on gender conventions such as the protector role. Men’s reliance on gender norms reflected in the plurality of masculinities that Jewish men used to construct their masculine identities. Some Jewish men, for instance, combined work masculinity and the protector role and moved to different parts of Germany or abroad, seeking to fulfil both roles. Military masculinity also guided the coping strategies of some men in their roles as guardians and heads of households. Some, such as Alfred Schwerin, tried to create a feeling of security at home for their families through performing the role of the military hero. With a great dose of hindsight, Schwerin remembered in his memoir that around 1938 he had anticipated a major Aktion against Germany’s Jews and thus was mentally prepared. Even more, he wanted to prepare his nine-year old daughter for future adversities. He recalled telling her:

Should I ever get arrested and sent to Dachau, do not be afraid and do not get frightened by anyone. You know I have participated in the world war. I have also told you many times that I had always been in the first line of combat [forderster Front] and that even though I had been injured several times and contracted typhoid in Russia, I never had the feeling that something bad could happen to me. Conversely, I felt the confidence that I would return to my home.

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[Heimat] healthy and safely. This feeling did not betray me. Listen then closely: Should I get arrested and transferred to Dachau, stay calm and wait. As confident I had been in 1914-1918 that I would return home, as strongly I declare to you today that I will also endure Dachau and return to you.105

Schwerin’s memory attests to the gendered character memories can take.106 Jewish men taking a heroic role in their own memory-narratives served a purpose that went beyond the events in question and might have helped the authors at the time of writing regain authority and status that they had lost, but that the memoirists did not fully disclose in their writing. It seems puzzling that Schwerin could have precisely predicted a nation-wide pogrom which caught most other German Jews by surprise on November 9, 1938, and that he even could foresee the place of his internment as he was indeed later sent to Dachau. His memoir, though imbued with hindsight, is still insightful as it intersects the author’s military identity and his identity as the protecting father, cumulatively constituting Jewish masculinity.

Again, age is a crucial factor to be considered in this context as Jewish fathers who were also World War I veterans often felt safe from any Nazi insults. They had survived the war, they reasoned, so they would endure Hitler’s dictatorship as well. Perhaps gullibly, these men radiated their belief in safety within their home and among their families. As war veterans, many felt not only better prepared for Nazi attacks and thought they could project their mental strength and sense of preparedness onto their families. Many could not even envision Nazi insults to deserving war veterans. Military masculinity and concepts of the male protector were intertwined.

105 Schwerin, Memoir, 5-6.
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Though Jewish men could rely on other types of masculinities, as this chapter has argued, some Jewish men’s identities as husbands and fathers altered. Cut off from the public sphere, some Jewish men started to cherish norms of traditional Jewish culture by coming to re-appreciate or newly appreciate models of domesticity, marriage and the family, especially if they had a certain class background, having previously come to esteem education. As mentor-educators, they could now personally pass on the bourgeois ideal of being well-educated.\textsuperscript{107} Though men might have varied in their degrees of building relations of trust, care and support towards their children and spouses – and Jewish men certainly did not start to become emotional subjects, displaying for the first time affections to their families after 1933 – considerable evidence points in the direction that Jewish men became more “domesticated,” taking on a new presence at home and interacting with the rest of the family, while women, as Marion Kaplan has shown, took on increasing responsibilities in the public sphere.

In addition to Jewish men acting as the providers of protection, guidance and emotional care, especially through the new level of intimate interaction with their children, at home or abroad, they were also the recipients of important emotional support that made their lives more bearable but also dependent. This gave men a sense of relief as children provided a distraction from the harsh realities they were facing. Children provided meaning and purpose to the lives of Jewish parents, a motivating force to ensure their children’s well-being as well as strengthen their own will to persevere and survive. Children, in other words, were fundamentally important for the emotional and psychological health of Jewish men in the Third Reich. Even though their roles as fathers changed and means to perform the protector role (albeit ambiguous in the first

\textsuperscript{107} Raffaella Sarti argues rightly that for too long, domesticity has been understood by historians as a female arena. See also her edited special issue “Men at Home: Domesticities, Authority, Emotions and Work,” Gender & History 27, no. 3 (2015): 521-886.
place) became more restricted, they were not deprived of fatherhood. By maintaining fatherhood, Jewish men could retain an important element of their masculinity. The affection and guidance but also the pain and agony that Jewish fathers inscribed into their diaries and the letters that were addressed to their children – often far away or meant for posterity – are thus emblematic to how they understood their masculine roles as fathers and husbands. Nazism, in short, was not successful in completely undermining German Jews’ dignity and self-worth. German-Jewish men succeeded in preserving identities as husbands and fathers, a notion that historiography needs to take more note of.

And what about Jewish sons? Observing how their role-model fathers and other men had accepted their responsibilities as men and not withered, given up to passive behaviors or abandoning their families, Jewish sons internalized and grew into the roles and expectations to which their fathers tried to adhere. Over the course of the Third Reich, witnessing their parents emotionally and economically suffer and deteriorate, adolescent Jewish sons matured, realizing their increased responsibility in helping out the family. This included precisely the same roles that Jewish fathers and husbands had exemplified through their own lives of being the protector,

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108 Stefanie Schüler-Springorum made a similar point when she argued that military masculinity should not be overstated and historians should pay closer attention to the emotional worlds of Jewish men and how they exhibited feelings and emotions such as in the businessman Aaron Liebeck’s 1928 autobiography that “contain[s] many instances of men weeping bitterly at a death…who are not ashamed to show their emotions in public.” See Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, “A Soft Hero: Male Jewish Identity in Imperial Germany through the Autobiography of Aron Liebeck,” in *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History*, eds. Benjamin Maria Baader, Sharon Gillerman & Paul Lerner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 103. See also Karin Breuer, “Competing Masculinities: Fraternities, Gender and Nationality in the German Confederation, 1815–30,” *Gender & History* 20, no. 2 (2008): 270-287.

109 Werner Angress argued that “fathers were caught up in the relentless economic pressures exerted upon their dwindling business activities by party and state… In the evening after work, [they] revealed to their families what in fact they had become - broken men. Indecision, fear, frustration, all these led to endless bickering between the parents and thereby made the home for their children a place to be avoided, to be fled.” Werner T. Angress, *Between Fear & Hope: Jewish Youth in the Third Reich* (New York: Columbia University, 1988), 33. My empirical evidence does not support this argument. For a similar critique of Jewish fatherless families, see Halkes-Carey who argues that though Jewish fathers showed signs of depression and indecisiveness, “more common were men who… continued to function, attempting to provide and protect… but also acting as head of the household, making significant decisions for their families and thereby sustaining a key element of their own gender identities,” see Halkes-Carey, “Jewish Masculinities in the Holocaust,” 111 & 201-202.
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caregiver and mentor. Arthur Katz-Kamer (b. 1910) did not leave Nazi Germany since he could not imagine leaving his parents behind in such a calamitous situation.\textsuperscript{110} He felt his parents needed him. Others who did leave Germany, hoping to first establish themselves economically and then have their families follow later, did so reluctantly and often with feelings of guilt. Joseph Adler (b. 1895) recalled how hard it was to leave his mother behind. Carl Schwabe, Alexander Szanto (1899-1972) and Alfred Wolf (1898-1981) expressed similar feelings of guilt.\textsuperscript{111} Adult sons who stayed behind, voluntarily or not, significantly supported their elderly parents. Isaak Behar (1923-2011) felt major relief when he and his father were assigned forced labor assignments with the same firm. At work, Isaak could make sure his elderly father was safe and if he could not keep up with the hard and fast-paced work, he could help and better protect him from his cruel supervisor.\textsuperscript{112} Cioma Schönhaus (1922-2015) also recalled, when his father was arrested and sent to a concentration camp in 1938:

\begin{quote}
Eleven o’clock passed and Papa did not come back… We walked across Alexanderplatz… Mama was biting her lip. Tears were rolling down her face. I gave her my arm and she took it. I was the man of the family now.\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[110]{Arthur Katz-Kamer, “Eidesstattliche Erklärung,” GDW Berlin.}
\footnotetext[111]{Adler, \textit{Joseph Adler the Family of Joseph and Marie Adler}, p. 89; Schwabe, \textit{Memoir}, p. 89; Alexander Szanto, \textit{Memoir}, LBINY, ME638 MM76, 107; Alfred Wolf, Memoir, LBINY, ME263 MM82, 250.}
\footnotetext[112]{Isaak Behar, \textit{Versprich mir, dass Du am Leben bleibst: Ein jüdisches Schicksal} 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Berlin: List Verlag, 2013), 86.}
\end{footnotes}
Chapter 5

Gender, Violence and Jewish Masculinities

in the Third Reich

This chapter’s central objective is to analyze the forms of violence and brutality that the Nazi terror system inflicted on Jewish men in the prewar years of the Third Reich and to show how such violence had an impact on Jewish masculine identities and gender relations. As a historiographical point of departure, this chapter draws on the conceptual model of gendercide that Adam Jones uses to explicate physical violence against gender-specific groups.¹ The chapter brings to light a new understanding of the one-sidedness of Nazi antisemitic violence prior to the actual Holocaust, with Jewish men as the primary victims.

This chapter, thus, goes against a historiography that puts focus on racist ideology only as the driving force of the Holocaust and instead argues that German-Jewish men were targeted gender-specifically and victimized in prewar Nazi Germany not simply as Jews but as Jewish men. As a result, Jewish men as “endangered men” reacted in gendered ways and developed gender-specific coping mechanisms. While in chapter 2 the focus was on Nazi attacks in discursive forms used for propaganda purposes, this chapter looks at physical attacks on Jewish masculinity.

In my investigation, I return to previously analyzed themes of this dissertation. Thus, this chapter looks at the repercussions of antisemitic propaganda, some of which I touched on in chapter 2, and asks how it was a driving force behind the violent attacks on German-Jewish men in the 1930s. Based on the widespread dissemination of antisemitic propaganda by the Nazi state, Jewish men in the prewar years were not just discursively emasculated in print media or motion

pictures. Gendered Nazi propaganda could have a direct and immediate impact on Jewish masculinities, particularly on Jewish men who were identified as “national threats” and who in some cases gradually identified themselves with the pervasive imagery and stereotypes of antisemitic propaganda. Based on the racial notion of a distinct Jewish physicality and demeanor, certain Jewish men in the early/mid-1930s were singled out and victimized by the Nazis, prior to the decision to annihilate the entirety of European Jewry. By the late 1930s, antisemitic violence had evolved and increasingly targeted all Jewish men, regardless of their looks or economic backgrounds.

Building on themes I introduced in Chapters 3 and 4, this chapter further looks at how this violence directed at Jewish men affected Jewish social and gender relations in Jewish families and in marriage. Finally, it examines some of the coping mechanisms by which many Jewish men confronted violence and oppression, such as their reliance on military masculinity, particularly in a concentration camp environment of military hyper-masculinity.

Following a historiographical introduction, in the first section I analyze physical violence and its effects on Jewish men in German society outside the concentration camp. Specifically, I will look at a) types of physical aggression that Jewish men faced in the open, public sphere, starting in 1933, followed by b) the effects this violence had on Jewish masculine identities and gender relations. In the second section, I focus on Jewish men’s imprisonment in concentration camps prior to World War II and again a) scrutinize forms of gendered oppression and violence in the camps, followed by b) the effects and reactions by Jewish men in these camps and the effects on gender relations and family life.
Historiography

In his work on gender and genocide, Adam Jones has argued that feminist scholarship and activism since the 1970s and 1980s has one-sidedly centered on the roots of male violence against women with the result of a “feminist-dominated analysis that designated males as the agents of the overwhelming majority of violent acts against women.” The result has been a large corpus of scholarship on gender and genocide that looks at victims of violence but uses gender synonymously for women. Important works on women and the Holocaust, such as those by Gisela Bock, Judith Baumel, Rochelle Saidel and others, have significantly contributed to a deeper understanding of (Jewish) women’s experience of dehumanization, sexual exploitation and murder under the Nazi regime. Yet, even though notions of female perpetrators have more recently come to attract attention, the predominant focus on women as gendered victims of the Nazis has taken men’s victimizations for granted. For instance, as the editor of Gender and Catastrophe (1997), Ronit Lentin has argued, while not proposing to universalize women as a victim group, that the concentration camp was an ultimate expression of the extreme masculinity and misogyny that undergirded Nazi ideology in that both Aryan and non-Aryan women were targeted on the basis of their biological destiny.

Referencing the Nazi concentration camps and the practice of forced sterilizations in the Third Reich as salient examples of Nazi misogynist oppression, Lentin argues for an understanding of women’s oppression by the Nazis. Such genocidal projects, the author asserts,

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2 Ibid., 234.
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rested on the eugenic conviction of German racial superiority inevitably discriminated against women as child-bearers… Elderly Jewish women (and men), useless to the Nazis, were sentenced to death. Women of childbearing age, although useful as workers, posed a menace because they could bear Jewish children and ensure the continuity of Jewish life.⁵

It is not my intention to undermine the research efforts and scholarship of historians who have adhered to a feminist understanding of gender. However, excerpts such as the ones presented above are problematic in that they use the term gender but in fact mean female. Such studies ignore or undermine gendered aspects of male suffering and male processing of violence. Lentin’s use of brackets in the above quote to include men who were also sentenced to death underlines this. Most importantly, however, such studies, despite their presentation of new knowledge, can be quite misleading. Jewish men were as important to the continued existence of the Jewish “race” as were childbearing women, and my discussion of Jewish race defilement underlines the central position that Jewish men, the impregnators of “Aryan” women, had in such discourses. Moreover, the Nazi concentration camp was not the ultimate expression of misogyny. Nazi concentration camps were first erected in 1933 and not, as the sheer number of studies on the Holocaust may suggest, with the outbreak of World War II. With the beginning of the Third Reich in 1933, for years men – Jewish and non-Jewish – constituted the overwhelming number of prisoners who were tortured and often murdered, while, as Kim Wünschmann has argued, in the early years of the Third Reich women were spared brutal forms of abuse as they did not reflect the male-gendered Jewish enemy stereotypes,⁶ a process Nikolaus Wachsmann refers to as a “gender-determined delay in the use of terror.”⁷

⁵ Ibid., 9.
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To be fair, feminist historiography has not been solely one-sided, and some historians of women have emphasized men’s unique vulnerability in the pre-Holocaust period. Focusing on Jewish women, Sybil Milton and Joan Ringelheim were among the first to note, even if only peripherally, that Jewish men were the primary targets of the Nazis: “They were certainly the first Jewish victims of forced labor and in the beginning, the primary targets of the Einsatzgruppen.”

Claudia Koonz also asserted that “women suffered far less from violent attacks than Jewish men until the deportations began in 1941. Before, the Gestapo, SA, police and angry mobs on the street assaulted only men.”

Finally, Marion Kaplan emphasized:

[Nazi] racism was not gender-neutral. In imagery and practice, the Nazi government and most Germans treated Jewish women differently from Jewish men. Nazi propaganda castigated Jewish men as cheats and traitors, depicting them as greedy bankers and pimps. The Nazis persecuted Jewish men early on, culminating with their arrests during the November pogrom. With rare exceptions, Nazi policy before the deportations bowed to taboos against physically abusing women in the public.

Findings by feminist historians such as the above, of Jewish men’s distinctly precarious situation in the pre-Holocaust years, are a significant contribution to gender scholarship. Yet, these statements remain isolated. With their focus on women’s history, these historians did not pursue deeper and nuanced distinctions of the kind of violence men faced, and more importantly, what the consequences of such violence were for men and masculinity.

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9 Claudia Koonz, Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 349.


11 This is not a criticism. Touching new ground back then, feminist historians had good reason to focus their attention on women, who previously had often been left out by general historians.
Again, the objective of the following is not to challenge feminist scholarship. Instead, it proposes to recalibrate a more nuanced balance in which men, in this case Jewish men, as gendered beings prominently feature both as victims of violence and as agents of gendered responses.

1. **Jewish men as victims in the Public Sphere, 1933-1939**

This section presents, first, a discussion of forms of violence, and second, an analysis of the effects this violence had on Jewish men and on gender relations.

a) **Forms of antisemitic violence**

As a starting point, a study of the effects of antisemitic propaganda and how it could be translated into violence against certain types of men proves helpful in conceptualizing early violence against German Jews. I have argued in Chapter 2 that racial-sexual antisemitic discourses targeted Jewish men and depicted them as sexual perverts, rapists and race defilers, stigmatizing them as perpetrators of the most heinous crime in Nazi ideology. In turn, some Jewish men adapted to such discourses by conceptualizing themselves as “endangered men,” withdrawing more into the private sphere or shying away from interacting with unfamiliar women in the public sphere.

Antisemitic propaganda, however, was not limited to sexualized discourses but incorporated other common and traditional themes that were political and economic in nature. Even in non-sexualized propaganda, Nazi antisemitism essentially relied on similar physiognomic features (e.g., nose, lips, hair) that portrayed the Jew as male and made him, “the Jew,” easily
recognizable. Such images were not only mass-produced in print magazines but were culturally perpetuated and enacted in other forms.

![Fig. 24. Carnival, Cologne 1934. “The Palestine Wagon: The Last ones are leaving”](image)

In Germany in the 1930s, a predominance of antisemitic depictions used male characters. There is the clear relationship between the graphic propaganda and the violence that German-Jewish men faced. The stereotyping of “the Jew” using male bodily features was not restricted to some radical Nazi ideologues working for a censored press, but as the photographs of the carnival parades above demonstrate, was accepted and socially perpetuated in Germany. From this shared image of the enemy, it was only one more step to target and assault them physically.

However, it was not only the visibility and recognizability of Jewishness, defined by Jewish maleness, that could lead to direct violence, but also the crucial association of Jewishness with criminality. As I argued in Chapter 2, Jewish women had been portrayed differently in Nazi

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12 Marion Kaplan similarly argued that “Nazi propaganda put the emphasis on Jewish men, the Jew or der Jude – usually strangely distorted males with huge noses and stomachs. These rulers of the world were occasionally accompanied by an obese woman bedecked in jewelry and her grotesque children, but generally it was the Jewish male whom the Nazis caricatured and vilified.” See Marion Kaplan, “The Jewish Response to the Third Reich: Gender at the Grassroots,” in Jews and Gender: The Challenge to Hierarchy, ed. Jonathan Frankel (Oxford: Oxford University, Press, 2000), 71.
propaganda from Jewish men who were depicted as (racial-sexual, economic or political) threats, ranging from race defilers, to exploitative capitalist-profiteers or Judo-Bolshevist conspirators. Ringelheim thus rightly argues that legitimation for targeting Jewish men was plentiful in antisemitic and racist propaganda: “They were already identified as dangerous.”

With the Jew being allegedly easily identifiable as a Jewish man and being associated with notions of criminality, street violence against Jews became more frequent. Already in 1934, the German-Jewish émigré organization Comité des Délégations Juives published evidence of violent outbursts against Jews “on the street.” Conceding that most of these attacks were politically motivated, the Comité argued however that it would have been quite astonishing, with all the pervasive anti-Jewish propaganda, if some antisemites had not started to inflict violence on German Jews. Violence, in other words, was predictably synchronized with propaganda.

The young Hermann Pressmann (b. 1914), son of a wealthy entrepreneur in Berlin, noted in his diary the first weeks of Hitler’s regime,

March 5, 1933: Today is the elections for the new Reichstag... Earlier in the big traffic circle I saw two Nazis and their victim carried away on a stretcher. Maybe he was injured, maybe he was dead. I considered how dangerous it was even to walk along the streets, as I was doing. I thought to myself that I was lucky to be walking away, when I saw another victim being carried.

March 23, 1933: In the streets are troublemakers and anti-Semites. You must let them have their peace without fighting or talking back... my own mind tells me to consider getting out of Germany while I am [still] alive.

April 22, 1933: Yesterday... I was alone with the salesman. A large man drunk, or pretending to be drunk, entered our store. His name was Heine. He was one of the men involved in the hold up against my father a short time ago. He said he wanted money to buy a beer. He refused to leave empty-handed. The salesman tried to keep peace by suggesting I give him money... [Then] he came... to me for a leather jacket. He threatened to beat me to death unless I complied. I locked myself in our private office. He threatened to jump through the plate glass. When I unlocked the

13 Ringelheim, Genocide and Gender, 21 & 24. Nechama Tec also argued that “because Jewish men rather than women were perceived as the chief enemies of the Third Reich, most of the terror was direct against them.” See Resistance: Jews and Christians who defied Nazi Terror (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26.

office, he punched my chin. I could not call the police. Last time they told me Jews were not entitled to police protection. Heine wanted to go to the back room and beat me. When he went into the back room, I ran outside. More of his buddies were out there. It was like going from the frying pan to the fire. I took a taxi and reported the incident to the police. I begged them to send [someone] to my father’s store... By that time my parents were back in the store. Heine was still carrying on... My parents bribed Heine to leave with a summer coat.15

Even prior to his encounter with the drunkard, Pressmann junior decided to emigrate. “I would like to get out of this country as soon as possible... Germany is growing more dangerous”16 Having settled in Belgium a few months later, Pressmann resisted his parents’ relentless attempts to persuade him to return to Berlin. In his diary, he noted: “I explained my position about Nazi arrests of visitors returning to Germany. Many of those in protective custody never returned alive.”17

Pressmann’s diary is instructive. In the first two diary entries, Pressmann did not make an explicit statement that the SA men were after Jewish men only. However, he stated that he was lucky to walk away unscathed and that it was too dangerous to talk back to these people. In other words, Pressmann contemplated a possible scenario in which he could fall victim to such street brutality. Because he had not been engaged in politics, however, he should have had no reason to fear the Nazi mob, unless he also considered himself as a Jewish man in his early 20s whose looks corresponded to the Nazi stereotypes. From the diarist’s writing, it remains speculation to what degree he perceived his outward appearance to be a risk factor. Pressmann’s diary entries become more comprehensible when photographs of him are added to the discussion of gendered imagery.

16 Pressmann, Diaries, April 20, 1933.
17 Ibid., Diary Entry June 18, 1933.
Pressman’s outward resemblance with the Nazi stereotype of “the Jew” is unmistakable, especially the caricature in the top-left of Figure 25 that shares with the author black, slightly receding, frizzy hair, horn-rimmed glasses and protruding ears. The twenty-year old bachelor was clearly afraid of the Nazi violence that he had witnessed on the streets and personally experienced in the first weeks of the Hitler regime. He was so frightened and overwhelmed by it that he haphazardly, while still dependent on his parents, decided to leave his family and home. Though his case is not representative, as most German Jews in 1933 did not escape from Germany and also did not fall victim to direct physical violence by antisemites, Pressmann convincingly demonstrates that German Jews had become fair game in Nazi Germany, subject to arbitrary violence by anyone who harbored antisemitic resentments without the state and the police interfering on their behalf. His diary entries further suggest that violence was directed against men, and though it remains speculation, it is likely that due to his close resemblance to the pervasive
and gendered propaganda images that the Nazis constructed of the archetypical Jew, Pressmann in the first months of the Hitler regime felt palpably threatened.

If Pressmann’s diary is not explicit enough in regard to how a Jewish-looking man might have felt unsafe, other accounts are. Linking Nazi violence to antisemitic propaganda that showcased a distinct Jewish male physiognomy, the Berlin physician Hertha Nathorff (1895-1993) recorded an entry in her diary on January 10, 1934, about a male patient who had been beaten bloody on the street because people had thought he looked Jewish.18 The physician and author Martin Gumpert (b. 1897) of Berlin, who managed to emigrate from Germany in 1936, recalled the following event that had occurred probably sometime in 1935:

Hordes of young men emerged in the street. No doubt, they were camouflaged SA men. The night prior, a new, antisemitic movie had premiered in one of the major cinema theatres… Windows were smashed and a train of people formed to search for Jews. Someone was carrying a distorted caricature of an old Jew with bloodshot eyes and wiry hair that was hanging down wild [krausiges Haar das wild herunterhing]… A young man with a pince-nez [Kneifer] on his nose was in panic running to the other side of the street, and a howling mob was running after him. A much larger group stood on the sidewalk and watched. The people were all silent. The expressions in their faces oscillated between curious enjoyment and repulsion. I stood next to these people and felt safe because they could not recognize [erkennen] in me the Jew, who was perpetually shown to them in the nefarious caricatures… Der Stürmer was displayed in showcases on the street… It was distributed in schools.19

Like Pressmann’s excerpt, Gumpert’s recollection is telling. First, the memoir illustrates that a large enough minority of German citizens – not only SA men in this case – succeeded in carrying out violent acts against German Jews in the early years of the Third Reich while a larger group was standing by and observing the scene. More importantly, however, the episode indicates that antisemitic propaganda could directly lead to antisemitic violence. It clearly demonstrates that

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propaganda alone could be sufficient to inspire violent acts against Jewish men. Even more strikingly, no criminal act had to be formulated and no criminal evidence was needed to turn the Jewish-looking male with the pince-nez into a villain. His Jewish male appearance sufficed. Conclusively, it can be argued that it was not just general antisemitism in Nazi Germany that theoretically targeted all Jews, not even all Jewish males, that led to violence in this case. Only through the male’s identification by the angry mob as Jewish did he become the target of a hunting scene. Whether he actually was Jewish or not remains, ironically, unknown.

It would be misleading, however, to argue that violence directed against German Jews in the prewar years was limited to Jewish-looking males. Violence simmered for years with occasional eruptions, as in the days of the anti-Jewish boycotts in April 1933, or, of course, during Kristallnacht in November 1938. In these and other instances, Jews confronted forms of violence regardless of their outward appearance. Undoubtedly, other identifiers too were utilized to brand and persecute Jews.

Through communal and personal relations, German Jews’ Jewish identity was generally known to Germans. Living within a gentile society on good terms for decades, particularly in smaller towns where communal interactions were more customary, one knew if one had a Jewish neighbor or made his purchases in a Jewish store or not. Gerta Pfeffer (b. 1912) recalled that in the early months of the Third Reich, anyone could denounce or arrest a Jew. A well-known lawyer, Dr. Werner, a highly-decorated war veteran, was in these tumultuous days arrested and murdered by the Nazis. Only after a few weeks of “letting off steam” (austoben), according to Pfeffer, did some order return, and even though one could read about a reward for finding Dr. Werner’s

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20 Pfeffer’s inclusion of the lawyer’s previous war service again underlines how military masculinity had become integral to gender relations and how it was acquired and performed by women and men. See Chapter 1.
murderer, no one ever was arrested.\textsuperscript{21} Of the anti-Jewish boycott on April 1, 1933, Hermann Tuggelin (b. 1908) remembered:

> I went to the store because I did not want to leave [my] mother alone there. I was reading a newspaper, [when] SA thugs entered the business. “Today we can settle scores \textit{[abrecknen]} with the Jewish pigs.” I did not fall for the provocation. In this moment, I received a terrible punch below my left eye. The blood splashed. I fell to the floor… The SA men fell over me, beating me. I do not know how long I was beaten…. I was brought to the Jewish hospital. Afterwards, I did not walk to my mother. I did not want to jeopardize her.\textsuperscript{22}

For Paul Barnay (b. 1884), an actor in Breslau, life dramatically changed on March 10, 1933. At his front door, he was arrested and told by two SA men to come with them to the police station. However, Barnay was driven to a nearby forest, and after walking for a few minutes, he was told to undress himself and do fifty push-ups. “Then punches pattered on me, whereupon I hit with my fist one of the guys in his face, making him fall into the bush.” Tuggelin was then more brutally beaten. After this, the SA men drove away.

> I was lying naked and bleeding alone in the forest. From my neck to my knees, there was no uninjured part. Through my underpants, I felt a soft matter. Was it an injury? It was not a wound, and this angered \textit{[empören]} and hurt me the most. Due to the kicks into my abdomen, I had emptied myself and now I was lying in blood and my feces. A bunch of blood and dirt. I was ashamed more than I was hurt.\textsuperscript{23}

I included these three abridged examples of early violence inflicted upon Jewish men, because often, due to an (understandable) focus on mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust, it is forgotten that ten years earlier, the Nazis took over power in Germany and from then on German Jews, men in particular, had become victims of physical violence.\textsuperscript{24} Moreover, while antisemitic

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\textsuperscript{24} Some additional memorable incidents are reported by Frederick Weil in his memoir. For instance, in one case, a father and son, both cattle dealers, were arrested as they allegedly had betrayed their gentile customers by abnormally
propaganda was not short on motives and themes of alleged Jewish misdeeds and criminal activities, the actual violence that was inflicted on Jews (and others) was downplayed or denied in the media.\(^{25}\) Antisemitic violence occurred within a semi-public sphere, surrounded by a cloud of silence. Furthermore, there was not always a direct logical connection between the choice of victim and to the application of antisemitic violence.\(^{26}\) Jewish men like Barnay, it seems, were randomly and arbitrarily selected and victimized; not even theft seems to have been the main motive for the two SA men.

It is thus crucial to realize that while antisemitic propaganda and its imagery of an alleged Jewish appearance could lead to direct violence against some men or to criminal investigations and conviction, as in the case of alleged Jewish race defilers with the German law enforcement and courts being involved, others in the early years of the Third Reich were affected by more arbitrary circumstances.

By 1938, antisemitic violence had become more widespread. The forms of discrimination and humiliation that both German Jewish men and women faced during Kristallnacht in the night of November 9, for instance, were numerous and they cannot be all listed here, but they included: forcing men to play soccer with Torah scrolls; coating men with tar, attaching them to an oxen-“beautifying” (verschönen) their cattle, including washing them, cutting their tails and polishing up the horns. Bother were sentenced to four and five years of prison. In another case, a Jewish resident was locked for six months because he had mistakenly – though the court saw it as an act of malevolence – locked up his neighbor’s cat in his barn. See Frederick Weil, Justitia Fundamentum Regnorum: Mein Leben vor und nach dem 33. Januar 1933, LBINY ME671 MM80, 12-13.

\(^{25}\) To make their point, the Comité quotes German newspapers that unabashedly claimed that during the boycott of April 1933, the police and the SA had maintained order and peace and only in exceptional cases did minor incidents occur. See Die Lage der Juden in Deutschland 1933. Das Schwarzbuch – Tatsachen und Dokumente ed. Comité des Délégations Juives, Paris 1934 (Frankfurt: Ullstein, Reprinted Edition 1983), 298-299.

\(^{26}\) Sometimes, however, violence stood in a somewhat rational correlation to economic motives, as many memoirs recall. Even though this was technically illegal, many Jews were arrested and extorted with more violence unless they complied with the Nazis’ demands, most notoriously the selling, liquidation or transferring of their properties, businesses and assets. Allan Steinweis also illustrates cases when Jews were brutalized until they agreed to transfer large sums of money to local SA chapters. See Alan Steinweis, Kristallnacht (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 78.
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wagon and forcing them to pull it through town; coercing men to walk barefoot over broken glass; 27 making men stand at attention for many hours in the cold; 28 and shooting men without any ambulance coming for help. 29 Torture in jail, prior to being sent to concentration camps, included beatings; being forced to beat one another; military drill exercises such as push-ups and squads; forcing to open one’s mouth for Nazis to spit in; forced use of toilets on command; 30 performing boxing matches against one another; pulling and rooting out each other’s hair and beards and more. 31

As the countless cases of brutalization demonstrate, starting in 1933, the Nazis used violence against innocent German Jews not in isolated, rare instances. The violence directed against Jewish men, however, was not gendered in itself, unlike the sexual kind of violence that targets women when they get raped or forced to abort a pregnancy. 32 Beating could have been inflicted on a Jewish woman (and this was done repeatedly during the actual Holocaust); yet, the use of violence in prewar Nazi Germany was set aside for men. In all the cases above, the basic common denominator seems to have been that the victim was Jewish and male. Regardless of the motives that led to the individuals’ victimization, the Nazis held on to the cultural gender order of not harming women and children for quite some time and within Germany. What this violence in turn meant for Jewish men and how it affected their behaviors and self-understanding as Jewish men will be analyzed below.

32 The only exception to non-sexualized forms of violence that I encountered in my research emanates from Bella Fromm’s diary. The author details how she had witnessed some Hitler Youth assaulting a younger Jewish boy whose pants they pulled down to see if he was circumcised. Fromm intervened on the Jewish boy’s behalf and took “the trembling child” home to his parents. See Bella Fromm, Blood and Banquets, 271.
b) The Effects of Violence on Jewish Men and Gender Relations

In the following section, I will analyze how Jewish men internalized the theme of a Jewish physicality in antisemitic propaganda and how they adapted to it in their day-to-day experiences. A great many accounts illustrate that German Jews in the 1930s were aware of these antisemitic images in Nazi papers, even if these readers were not always, or hardly at all, subjected to direct physical assault. Martin Gumpert’s description of a Jewish man with horn-rimmed glasses anxiously taking flight from an angry mob is instructive as the author, a Jewish man, explicitly distinguished himself from the persecuted individual due to the serendipitous fact that the passengers did not identify him as a Jew. For Gumpert, it was relatively safe to witness the assault. Had he thought otherwise, assessing himself to be at risk, his behavior and reaction to the situation might have been dramatically different, likely a rapid escape.

Gumpert’s case is instructive to the historian as it strengthens the argument that Nazi propaganda had a significant impact on the self-understanding of German Jews, some of whom came to react and identify themselves as mirror images of the vilified caricatured Jew in the media; or who internalized yet rejected such impositions and distinguished themselves from the visual antisemitism, such as in Gumpert’s case. Even then, however, a direct influence of such propaganda on the individual is discernible. It is crucial to realize that even men like Gumpert, who seemingly changed little in their approach to life and who were not directly confronted with verbal and physical violence, had taken in and adopted the prevailing discourses of Nazi antisemitism. For some Jewish men, thus, their gender identities as men was increasingly contingent on Nazi constructions. The businessman Siegmund Weltlinger (1886-1874) delineated his behavior during Kristallnacht:

On Monday November 10, I was warned already early in the morning by phone not to leave the house because Jews were being arrested on the street and on public
transportation. But this seemed unlikely to me and moreover, I did not have to fear being physically recognized [äußerlich erkannt werden] as a Jew. Thus, I drove into the city and saw everything… a terrible sight. Most stores had no windows left.  

The businessman Adolf Riesenfeld (1884-1977) of Vienna also recalled that he was able to witness the events of Kristallnacht on the street without having to fear any attacks on him as he also was not Jewish in appearance.

Unlike Wolf and Riesenfeld, however, other Jewish men in the Third Reich were warier about their appearance in public and adjusted their behaviors accordingly. Walter Besser (b. 1911) remembered how his social life changed in the 1930s as a direct result of Nazi propaganda:  

I have never tried to go to the movie theatre. Doing so was risky. Blonde Jews did not stand out. But anyone who looked a bit more Jewish, as I did, could not dare. The Jewish appearance [Aussen] was of course a cliche. There were many people who looked more Jewish than a Jew. But a slightly curved nose and a different walk [Gang] due to flat feet, black hair, and dark eyes were characteristic.

Besser illustrates how Nazi propaganda attempts to visually mark Jews could have a profound, effect on Jewish men and women. While some men felt safer because they did not conform to the antisemitic clichés, others felt less secure and were more self-aware because of their looks and the possibility that they could get into compromising situations. Gerhard Bry (b. 1911), professor of economics, interpreted his outward-based Jewishness as too risky to go to work: “It was dangerous for Jews to show their faces at the school, and my face looked sufficiently [stereo]typical to make matters worse.”

This process of negotiating one’s identity based on antisemitic body stereotypes was complex and not a male-exclusive experience. Women too internalized Nazi discourses on antisemitic imagery, evaluating Jewish men’s resemblance or dissimilarities to the propagated

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34 Adolf Riesenfeld, *Diaries*, LBINY ME787, 87.
images. Clearly, Jewish men’s visual appearances were multiple and heterogeneous. For many Jews, propaganda had little direct effect on their lives and they continued defining masculinity through work, social honor and family responsibilities. In the eyes of the Nazis, however, a Jew was one who looked Jewish, a rhetoric to which many Jews gradually adapted.

In oral interviews as late as the 1990s, German Jewish survivors occasionally still reflected on how they had adapted to the Nazi way of visually conceptualizing “the Jew.” In a letter, Monika Joseph interpreted her late husband’s survival in Nazi Germany as a corollary to his serendipitous outward appearance (äußeres Erscheinungsbild), which did not correspond to the then prevailing clichés about the complexion of Jewish men. About her husband, she wrote:

He was grown tall (hoch gewachsen): 182 cm.
He had light blue-grey eyes.
He was always elegantly and neatly dressed (gepflegt), even in his darkest days.37

Strikingly, sixty years after the events, the author continued to perpetuate a Nazi-instigated discourse of a distinct Jewish physicality and still emphasized that her husband, in contradiction to the stereotype, was a tall, blue-eyed handsome man who took care of his appearance, all features that previously had been codified as un-Jewish. Such references suggest that German Jews, men and women, had taken the Nazi discrimination based on physiognomic markers to the innermost core of their identities with lasting implications. The stereotypically-appearing Jew was a benchmark that German Jews lived with, whether accepted or resisted.

As I have argued, German Jews internalized the Nazi discourses of Jewish physicality, even if they disassociated themselves from them. With the intermittent eruptions of street violence starting in 1933, however, Jewish men came to increasingly fear Nazi violence regardless of their looks. Thus, while a salient “Jewish” appearance could certainly have had detrimental effects on

some men in certain contexts, other men who might not have identified themselves in this way with anti-Jewish propaganda still had concerns over their physical safety. While Jewish men could be victimized based on their looks, antisemites did not limit their harassment to these men, resulting in more widespread fears among German Jews for their male relatives.

_Fear_

Statements that German Jews lived in fear in Nazi Germany might seem trivially obvious. However, without retrospective notions of the Holocaust, it is notable that for many years, the fears that German Jews developed, besides existential-economic ones, were predominantly of physical harm and were by and on behalf of husbands, sons and other male relatives. Hertha Nathorff confessed in her diary in 1935 how anxious she was every time her husband, a physician, left the house:

> Late at night, he [my husband] gets called and every time, I am afraid, especially when it is new patients. They often lure physicians into a trap, and rob or beat them.\(^{38}\)

Already on May 1, 1933 Willy Cohn (1888-1941) scribbled down his fears of the Nazi regime in his diary: “Woke up at 3 in the morning, bathed in sweat. I dreamed that I was in protective custody.”\(^{39}\) Cohn, an upright citizen, father of four and teacher by profession, and Nathorff’s husband, a respected physician, had legitimate reasons for being fearful. The Nazi takeover in early 1933 triggered an atmosphere of fear among German Jews, and witnessing the street brutalities, arrests, denunciations and verbal harassments made Jewish men and women feel that they or the men in their lives could also be among the numerous victims of Hitler’s regime.

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\(^{38}\) Nathorff, _Tagebücher_, 77. Trans. S. Huebel.

Strikingly, the re-configuration of Jewish men into “endangered men” in response to their fears was a process in which men and women equally participated. Jewish women, as Marion Kaplan has shown, were fully aware of the disproportionate danger to which men were exposed. Jewish women, in their anxieties for the males in their lives and sons, participated in the emotional and social life of German Jewry that perceived men to be at greater risk. As Kurt Rosenberg (1900-1977) noted in his diary, his wife was very concerned for him when the doorbell rang one evening in April 1933. It was a courier, but his wife immediately thought of the SA. Although family members shared their anxieties over men’s safety, it was Jewish men who were directly affected.

Martin Hausner (b. 1913) who worked in a dentistry lab, had a verbal argument in early 1933 with a co-worker. In his diary, he noted in April 1933:

In the lab, I was working with a colleague, a Nazi, with whom I had clashed before. On Thursday, March 30, I had exams at the German Association of Dentists. My colleague used my absence from work to ask my coworkers if I had told any horror stories [Greuelmärchen] about him. I certainly had expressed my indignation pertaining to the shameless assaults on Jewish life and property, but I never mentioned anything about cut-off hands and jabbed eyes [ausgestochene Augen]. The thug [Hund] gathered everything, added 90% of his imagination and went to the SA to denounce me. He was so dimwitted, however, that he boasted about this to his co-workers, who told me right away when I went unsuspectingly to work on Friday morning. Denunciation at the SA means being ambushed and receiving the worst beatings, if not more… I could not live and could not die. The ground began to burn under my feet.

Caught by fears of Nazi mistreatment, Hauser decided to escape, giving up his job, his home and his parents, culminating in a major watershed in his young life. Following a relaxation of violence after 1933, physical fears could and did simmer down during the mid-1930s, but they

40 Kurt Rosenberg, Diaries, 1916-1939, LBINY, AR25279, April 14, 1933.
42 In a similar case that underlines how emotionally challenging it was to decide to escape from Germany, Wolfgang Roth (b. 1910) of Berlin and in the theater business (and a colleague of Berthold Brecht), interpreted his situation in 1933 as too risky. With a heavy heart, he decided to escape to Prague. “I never saw mother and father again.” See Wolfgang Roth, Memoir, LBINY, ME315 MM65, 75.
blazed up again in 1938. Walter Tausk (1890-1941), a merchant of Breslau, wrote about the renewal of tensions in his diary:

For months, I have been tortured by enduring sleep deprivation during the day… At night, I wake up three to four times, being in all kinds of anxious states (*Angstzustände*). In the daytime, anxiety, plus sudden rising heat rushes and headaches.43

Clearly, for Tausk, the issue of fear was not so much a matter of potentially being brutalized by Nazi thugs sometime in the future as for Hauser; instead, the anticipation of such a scenario caused serious mental distress with severe effects on his body. Alexander Szanto (1899-1972), a journalist who had been interrogated by the Gestapo several times, recalled that in 1938 he still had not become accustomed to the dread that rushed through his bones when he thought about being taken away from his bed at night.44 Having watched the invasion of his friend’s home by the SA, Adolf Riesenfeld started to fear his own arrest in the spring of 1938. As a result, he always carried cyanide pills (*Zyankali*), then a common chemical used to commit suicide.45 These excerpts show that the violence inflicted by the Nazis on the street, in people’s homes or in the concentration camp itself was not necessarily always the primary cause of fear. It was the nerve-wracking anticipation, the uncertainty, the not-knowing if and when the arrest, deportation and maltreatment would occur that turned out to be so menacing to Jewish men and their families. On November 20, 1938, ten days after the *Kristallnacht* pogroms, Willy Cohn recounted his unceasing state of anxiety:

After dinner, I took a walk with Trudi for the first time since Friday a week ago and breathed fresh air for the first time. It did me good! A person feels like a criminal walking along empty and ill-lit alleys, hoping to avoid people who might ask, “How come you aren’t in the camp?”46

45 Riesenfeld, *Diaries*, 49.
46 Cohn, *Breslau Diaries*, 193.
Though 1938 marked a high point in prewar terms of violence and the mass deportation of Jewish men into concentration camps (see next section), fears by and directed at Jewish men did not dissipate in the following two years. After the war had broken out, but before German Jews learned about the extermination camps in Poland, families and Jewish wives especially continued being concerned over their husbands’ state of safety. Elizabeth Freund (1898-1982) recalled how fearful she was for her husband:

On a Saturday night, around quarter to ten, the door rings. Good Heavens! Who can it be so late and unannounced? It cannot be Jewish acquaintances because they are not allowed to be outside after 8 o’clock. It can only be a house search. The doorbell rings a second time! What shall we do? They are going to take my husband – but where should he hide in this small apartment? Nothing helps, we must open.47

In these cases described above, fear was not a gendered reaction. Men and women both developed and shared fears in Nazi Germany. Yet, fear over physical safety could be pronounced in gendered terms, and typically was about Jewish men. In their sporadic attacks, SA men attacked Jewish men, but ignored women.48

Reactions to fear and the threat of violence

While fears could take on a gendered layer, the reactions to these fears are no less important to consider. Jewish-looking or not, German Jews resorted to gendered reactions in situations that they perceived as perilous in two interrelated ways: escape and hide.

Testimonies of Jewish men hiding and escaping date back to early 1933, weeks following the Nazi takeover. Willy Pressmann (see above) decided to immediately leave Germany after his incident with a drunkard in his father’s shop. Martin Hausner also escaped from Germany, fearing

47 Elizabeth Freund, *Memoir*, LBIN Y, ME153 MM24, 48. It turned out to be a friend of the couple who had knocked on the door.
his co-worker and his SA colleagues. Julius Goldstein (b. 1914) of Dortmund recalled that after he was insulted in a pub by vulgar language (“Are swine allowed in here now?”) by an SA man in mid-1933, he picked up an ashtray with which to hit the SA thug. He fled the pub and, shortly after, Germany. He first went to a relative in Luxemburg and then, on to Palestine on a hachschara program.49 Joseph Dünner (1908-1978), a medical student and author of critical articles on fascism, feared for his safety after the Nazis had taken power. First, he found accommodation at a physician friend’s residence. On April 1, he illegally crossed the Swiss border near Basel.50 Hermann Zimmermann (b. 1925) was still a teenager when local Nazi boys began harassing him on the street. One day, his older brother, who accompanied him from school, decided to fist-fight with the SA. Zimmermann’s brother shortly afterward decided to flee from Germany, illegally crossing the German-Belgian border.51

In these early cases of escaping from Germany, the individuals typically had a specific reason to predict adverse treatment by the Nazis. Active in political or journalistic endeavors, or by standing their ground and fighting back Nazi assaulters, these men prudently interpreted their safety to be at imminent risk. In such tense situations, therefore, defying Nazi intimidations and deciding to physically resist could represent a short-term victory – a Nazi threat might have been temporarily diverted and Jewish (military) masculinity enacted by brave and courageous behavior – but it was soon superseded by long-term concerns and fears over the conflict’s consequences, with escape remaining the best option.

49 Julius Goldstein, “Oral Interview,” USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. Goldstein’s life story is particularly remarkable. From Palestine, he decided to participate in the Spanish Civil War, fighting for the communists. Eventually, he ended up in the concentration camp Gur in France, from which he was deported to Auschwitz. In the final year of the war, he was forced to go on a Death March to the concentration camp Buchenwald, where he was finally liberated.
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In the spring of 1938, after the German takeover of Austria, Austrian Jews who had been known to be politically active were on the hunting lists of the Nazis. Paul Martin Neurath (1911-2001) recalled that in March 1938, when the Nazis were after him, he first hid at his aunt’s place in Vienna. Then he decided to make his way to Czechoslovakia on foot. After some days of sleeping under the open sky, he got denounced by a farmer close to a village where had hoped to purchase some food and after a brief pursuit over some corn fields by the police, he was arrested and sent to Buchenwald.\(^{52}\) In the summer of 1938, first in Austria and then all over Germany, the Nazis started rounding up Jewish and non-Jewish individuals with minor criminal pasts, beggars and the unemployed.\(^{53}\) Hans Reichmann (1900-1964) remembered the numerous crying wives who came to see him in his function as counselor at the *Reichsvertretung der Juden* (Reich Federation of Jews) in the summer of 1938, desperately begging him for help.\(^{54}\) In this time and with growing fears among German Jews, more resorted to hide-and-escape strategies, even ones who had no records of criminal offenses. In his diary, the Austrian Paul Steiner (1913-1996) confessed in June


53 The so-called *Juni-Aktion* was Himmler’s plan, first in former Austria, then nationwide, to arrest Jewish asocial (loosely defined as unemployed, homeless, etc.) and Jewish males who had a “criminal record” of more than four weeks of prison. However, the targeted number was overreached by a lose execution of the order. Faludi has researched that some men were arrested due to improper crossing over an intersection or due to dirty license plates. Over 12,000 people were arrested, including some 2300 Jewish prisoners who were deported to Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. The overall goal of the arrests was to increase pressure on these individuals and German Jews in general to expedite their emigration from Germany. As a result of these largescale arrests, the number cases of recorded maltreatment, suicide and murder in concentration camps skyrocketed. See Christian Faludi, *Die Juni Aktion 1938: Eine Dokumentation zur Radikalisierung der Judenverfolgung* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2013). For a primary account, see Frederick Weil, *Justitia Fundamentum Regnorum: Mein Leben vor und nach dem 33. Januar 1933*, LBINY ME671 MM80. See also Fromm, *Blood and Banquets*, 273; and Willi Tichauer’s witness report which estimates that after two months, of the 500 Jews that had been shipped to Buchenwald in the summer of 1938, about 150 had died. Willi Tichauer, “Der Schafstall,” in *Der Buchenwald-Report: Berichte über das KZ Buchenwald bei Weimar*, ed. David A. Hacket (München: Beck Verlag, 2002), 282. Among the arrested in 1938, preceding *Kristallnacht*, were also Jews without a German citizenship. Thousands of East European, typically Polish, Jews had settled in Germany after WWI without ever taking on a German or Austrian citizenship. In October 1938, such Jews faced deportation, a state policy that in fact triggered the events of *Kristallnacht* when a Polish-born Jew committed the assassination of a diplomat in Paris.

1938 that he only dared to go out in the dark, for a maximum of fifteen minutes “to catch at least some fresh air.”

For the majority of German Jews, however, it was November 9-11, 1938 that marked a sudden turning point in their experience of Nazi antisemitism. Following the assassination of a diplomat in Paris a few days earlier, the Nazis staged a violent nation-wide pogrom during the night of November 9. In addition to the material destruction of buildings and properties, German Jews were brutally invaded in their homes, typically during the night, and verbally and physically assaulted in ways that led to the death of more than 90 Jewish men alone. In the following days, more than 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to the concentration camps Buchenwald, Dachau and Sachsenhausen where hundreds more would die in the following months.

News of Jewish men’s arrest in these November days spread swiftly and many Jews, husbands and wives, were encouraged to hide. James Bachner (b. 1922) and his father evaded their arrest by escape:

Papa and I were fugitives and afraid of getting caught by the police and taken to a concentration camp. Going back to our home was not an option and hiding in Berlin was out of the question too…and we didn’t have a chance obtaining a visitor visa to escape to Amsterdam. Smuggling ourselves across any border was also hopeless as they were tightly guarded. The only option we had was to try to get into Poland.

In the weeks and months following Kristallnacht, the Jewish Central Information Office (JCIO) in Amsterdam, headed by Alfred Wiener (1885-1964) collected witness testimonies and reports by Jews about their experiences of November 9 and after. In numerous accounts, German Jewish

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55 Paul Steiner, Diaries, LBINY, AR25208, Diary 7, Entry June 15, 1938.
57 Alfred Wiener was a German Jew who devoted much of his life to documenting antisemitism and racism in Germany and Europe and uncovering the crimes of Germany's Nazi regime. He was the founder and long-time director of the Wiener Library, an institution devoted to the study of the Holocaust.
men recalled their decisions to hide in order to defy Nazi arrest and likely mistreatment. One anonymous author recalled:

Mother was restless. I was not supposed to stay inside the apartment. Therefore, for a while, I was driving the car through the city and witnessed how the destruction of the Jewish residences was fully in place. Eventually, I parked because I no longer felt safe in the car.\(^{58}\)

Another account read:

During these days when Jewish men one after another [reihenweise] were taken out of bed early in the morning and dragged [verschleppt] to KZs, our former maid Marie, a Catholic from Pomerania, took my father to her place where he spent several nights. SA men appeared multiple times in our apartment to take my father. At my aunt’s, who had a two-bedroom apartment in Berlin, a total of six male relatives, my cousin included, lived there during the period of the pogroms. Others resided in the Grünwald forest, in spite of the November cold.\(^{59}\)

A third report sent to the JCIO recalled:

In Berlin it was possible to hide and between November 10 and 20, thousands of Jewish men lived an existence similar of hunted game [gehetztes Wild]. Some were on the go day and night, using public transportation. Many spent their nights at different places, often in the homes of already arrested Jews, often with Aryans, some of who were quite supportive. Eleven Jewish men stayed in a villa of an Aryan merchant, some who did not even know the proprietor but were told about him by friends. In a tiny cigar shop owned by an Aryan which was about nine square meters in size, two Jews spent fourteen consecutive nights there on chairs.\(^{60}\)

Not only in 1938, the strategies to hide or escape varied and depended on situational factors like geography but also luck. Leo Langnas (b. 1895) was able to escape from his arresters who came to his home when he faced detention in November 1938.\(^{61}\) Ernst Eisenmayer (b. 1920), an experienced mountain climber (Bergsteiger) escaped over the Austrian Alps into Switzerland, from where, however, he was sent back and eventually imprisoned in Dachau.\(^{62}\) Louis Srulowitz

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(b. 1922) had to try three times to escape into Belgium. Klaus Loewald (b. 1920) and his father Hans-Georg, on the other hand, escaped arrest in their hometown by going on a trip throughout Germany, staying in different cities. As they were not Jewish-looking, they figured there was minor risk in facing arrest. Yet they changed their quarters every few days, just to be safe.

The means of hiding and escape, as illustrated, were gender-specific reactions by Jewish men, who faced arrest, deportation and victimization. Both strategies were pragmatic and spontaneous choices and augmented their new status as “endangered men.” Men who had been accustomed to the provider and protector roles for years felt forced to jettison these gender conventions and flee from their homes, seeking refuge elsewhere.

In contrast to the accounts describing men’s flights, there is equally significant and voluminous evidence that illustrates contradicting behaviors by men and understandings of masculinity. While many Jewish men, as the primary targets of Nazi violence during the 1930s and especially in 1938, reacted by removing themselves from their homes and workplaces, where they could easily be arrested, and placed themselves as a form of emergency measure in locations of hiding, other Jewish men either interpreted the looming danger differently or consciously decided not to run away but to directly face the upcoming Nazi affront.

Hertha Nathorff, after learning about the mass arrests on November 10, called her husband who was at work, urging him not to come that night. He did so anyway. Sigmund Weltlinger’s son came running toward him on his walk home, warning his father that a Gestapo man was waiting at home. Weltlinger went home anyway, where he was arrested. While these excerpts do not explicitly relay an impression of men’s use of courageous military masculinity, it is likely that

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63 Louis Srulowitz, Memoirs, LBINY ME1329 MMIII3, 4.
64 Klaus Loewald, My Kristallnacht, LBINY, ME1203 MMII39, 2-5.
65 Nathorff, Tagebücher, 122.
both men contemplated their likely arrest, weighed all other options and their obligations toward their spouses and children, and concluded it to be best to turn themselves in. Hugo Burkhardt (1899-1971) recalled similar thoughts when he faced arrest in early 1933. If he did not comply, perhaps his relatives would face retaliations and even arrest. He also turned himself in. Otto Kollisch did not escape but in fact successfully negotiated with the SS to postpone his arrest as he was a veteran and the single parent of two children. Other accounts are even more explicit and demonstrate how men in situations of danger consciously applied gendered behaviors and norms that were linked to hegemonic models of military masculinity, including steadfastness, bravery, and courage. Many of these men were war veterans, and as in the war, so they reasoned, they could not run away from danger. Alfred Schwerin (b. 1892) recalled in his memoirs that he did not want to act cowardly. After he had brought his daughter to school on the morning of November 10 and had realized what was happening, he contemplated:

Should I dodge...? [mich drücken]. This thought crossed my mind only for a few seconds. I abruptly made an entirely different decision. To direct threats, everyone reacts differently… It went against my inner conviction to take flight [in die Büsche schlagen] and with a mixture of anger and stubborn defiance, I ran right into the danger.

For the ones who did not shy away from a possible altercation with the Nazis, notions of military masculinity to cope with the aggressors were central. Otto Kollisch could defy his arrest as he was a father, but perhaps more important to the intruders was his military record:

[My objection] that I was honored with several distinctions as a combat fighter and had once risked my life for four years for this country… calmed them down and they dropped the arrest and threatened that they would come for me in six weeks if by that time I should still be around.

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68 Otto Kollisch, *Diary*, Peter Kollisch Collection, LBINY AR10717, Box 1, Folder 2, p. 9.
Facing arrest, other men also referred to their wartime accomplishments. Hermann Pineas (b. 1892) convinced his arresters of his war injury with the fortunate outcome of no arrest.\textsuperscript{71} Adolf Riesenfeld (1884-1977) was at a friend’s when the SA marched into his place in March 1938, shortly following Austria’s annexation. When the SA hordes were searching the apartment for hidden communist literature and weapons and instead discovered a badge of military honor, the SA man in charge inquired about it and demanded proof that he had fought in the war. After a few minutes, Riesenfeld’s friend was able to also find the certification of honorable service that had been issued by Hitler. As a result, the leader (\textit{Anführer}) asked his men to stand in military formation and salute to the comrade, followed by the platoon marching out of his apartment.\textsuperscript{72}

The civil servant and local politician Franz Memelsdorff (1889-1958) put on his World War I medals upon his arrest to be sent to Dachau:

I was greatly excited [\textit{erregt}]. I had participated in the war, had been a lieutenant for three years, had fought at Verdun, at the Somme, in Flanders, at the Chemin de Dames, in Russia and the Balkans, had been injured – but arrested I had never been in my life… I was wearing the Iron Cross First and Second Class, the Front Fighter Badge [\textit{Frontkämpferabzeichen}] the Badge of Injured Soldiers [\textit{Verwundetenabzeichen}], etc.\textsuperscript{73}

Clearly military masculinity in such unexpected moments of personal violation was of great significance to some Jewish men, particularly the ones who identified as war veterans. It helped them, in rare cases, to get out of these compromising situations without being arrested. More often, however, it helped them maintain a sense of stoicism, dignity and masculinity. From a literary perceptive it also helped them to re-construct themselves in their memoirs as real men. As military men who had witnessed and participated in a brutal war many years earlier, these men

\textsuperscript{71} Hermann Pineas, \textit{Memoir}, LBINY ME502 MM4 MM61, 16.
\textsuperscript{72} Riesenfeld, \textit{Diaries}, 48.
upheld a sense of self-worth. As hardened, toughened men, they were not to be intimidated by young Nazi thugs who, in their minds, knew nothing about military matters. Some, like Joseph Adler (b. 1895), even dared to verbally altercation with the Nazi intruders when they faced arrest. Adler asked the arresting officer if he had fought in the war and what his experience had been like:

And then it turned out that during the years that I fought in the hell of Verdun, in the first trenches as an advanced artillery observer at the “Hoeh 304” he had a job way back from the front. Of course, it is much simpler and surer to attack innocent citizens than to lie in the furthest front trenches. I made this very clear to him. I made no bones about it.74

Undoubtedly, some recollections of Kristallnacht are distorted by a retroactive over-representation of military masculinity and must be taken with a grain of salt. In the examples above, often the narrators who had experienced Kristallnacht recalled their 1938 experiences years later. Boasting about their heroic behaviors when confronting Nazi invaders in their homes can be the product of a post-traumatic process in which men re-assigned themselves agency and masculine identity that they had, or thought they had, lost under the Nazis. It is quite possible that many men did not act quite as courageously as they made themselves appear to have done in their own memoirs and that in fact their reactions might have differed little from those of the other men who decided to hide or flee. For others yet, their arrest was perceived as a shameful, emasculating event. Ernst Hochsinger, for instance, noted that

I do not want to submit myself to the role of the prisoner; I do not want to be dependent on the orders by others in the presence of my wife; I am ashamed of having to wait for instructions from a stranger that I must follow.75

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The number of accounts, however, that demonstrate courage and brave defiance in situations when one should have feared for his life leads me to infer that regardless of how bravely each individual man may have acted while facing an uncertain fate in that moment of invasion and arrest, military norms of standing one’s ground and defending one’s “castle” certainly might have influenced the behavior of some Jewish men. Acting soldierly while facing gangs of military-like men in uniform helped Jewish men in this moment and in their postwar reconstructed memoirs to sustain their masculinities. In such situations of masculinized power exhibited by the Nazis, some Jewish men reacted by putting themselves on an equal footing. Former soldiers faced present-day soldiers, negotiating relationships of power and masculinity. In some of these cases, Jewish men were successful in generating respect, based on their past military sacrifices. Even in power negotiations that ended unsuccessfully for Jewish men, their contestations of preserving masculinity, keeping a clear conscience, knowing they had resisted bravely and faced the danger like men, were integral for them. Decorating themselves with war medals on their way to the concentration camps emphasizes this.

On the other hand, Jewish men who had decided to escape and hide did not necessarily emasculate themselves. In their postwar memoirs, admissions of guilt and wrongdoing are virtually absent. Whether boasting of oneself as a manly man was a common literary technique or an actual gendered behavior at the time, evidence for the opposite are much rarer. Few confess to what society might have defined as unmanly demeanors. What man likes to appear cowardly in his own memoir?

Jewish men were gender-specifically targeted and victimized starting in 1933 and escalating in late 1938. Their reactions varied according to standards and norms of masculinity. Similar to the ambiguously prescribed behavior of protecting one’s family and home, there was no
universal template of courageous behavior that Jewish men were supposed to follow. The attacks against them based on their religious-racial and gender identities were unprecedented and most men had no guiding principles or frames of reference they could draw on. Most men realized that they were simply powerless in such situations as singled-out individuals. Being victimized, therefore, was not a sign of Jewish emasculation but simply an inevitable manifestation of being “endangered.” Jewish men, between 1933 and 1941, like Jews all over Europe during the Holocaust, had few if any means to resist. In realizing this, preferring to run away or hide was in fact a sensible survival strategy that no one within the Jewish communities then or in the postwar era condemned.

2. Jewish Men in Concentration Camps, 1933-1939

In prewar Nazi Germany, the great majority of concentration camp inmates were men. Between 1933 and 1939, approximately 40,000 Jews were held in concentration camps, with the vast majority being men. An estimated 2000 to 3000 Jewish men died during this time as a result of violence, either inside the camps or from consequences of their imprisonment. On the other hand, Kim Wünschmann asserts that about 4 to 10 percent of camp prisoners were Jewish and non-Jewish women during this time and that there is no recorded killing of a female prisoner prior to 1939. Such numbers led Jane Caplan to conclude that it took several years, until the end of 1937, before women’s camps “even began to diverge from the existing instructions and norms of women’s custody and even longer before the treatment of women inmates approached the standard

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77 Ibid., 235. During Kristallnacht alone, an estimated 90 people were killed. See Steinweis, Kristallnacht, 61.
78 Wünschmann, Before Auschwitz, 7.
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brutality long applied to men."79 Despite such gender-biased statistics, however, historians have made relatively few attempts to examine (Jewish) men as a distinct category of victims, unlike feminist historians who have importantly enriched the scholarship of women’s victimization under Nazi rule.80

In the following two sections, I will first briefly outline some forms of violence that Jewish men faced in Germany’s prewar concentration camps, and secondly discuss the effects that concentration camp imprisonment had on individual Jewish men, their gender identities and on gender relations with their families outside the KZ. Acknowledging Gisela Bock’s caution, the guiding principle of the following discussion is not to create a hierarchy of suffering (Hierarchie des Leidens), drawing judgmental comparisons between male and female suffering,81 but to use gender methodology to enrich the metaphor “different horrors, same hell” with more substance and meaning.

a) Gender and Violence in German Concentration Camps

With the immediate construction of concentration camps in early 1933, Jewish men became subject to arrest and incarceration. While in the first few months and years of the Third Reich Jewish men were often arrested due to their previous engagement in politics, journalism and law,

80 Historians with a feminist approach have shown that women in Nazi concentration camps had to face specific forms of violence and after-effects that pertained to women only, including rape, abortion, pregnancy, childbirth and the sheer impossible task of keeping newborns alive in camp environments. Feminist scholarship, however, is not always in full agreement. The 1980s Historikerinnenstreit, for the first time brought to light scholarly disagreement over women’ roles in the Third Reich. Disagreeing with Gisela Bock’s focus on women as victims, Claudia Koonz argued for reconsidering women also as perpetrators. Since the 1980s, new insightful and nuanced studies on women as participants in the Nazi genocide, in their roles as female concentration camp guards for instance, have augmented previous scholarship on women’s role in the Third Reich and the Holocaust. See for instance Wendy Lower, Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).
81 Gisela Bock, ed. Genozid und Geschlecht: Jüdische Frauen im nationalsozialistischen Lagersystem (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2005), 8.
as Nikolaus Wachsmann has explained, Jewish men were treated inside the camps as Jewish prisoners, subjected to additional abuse and violence by members of the SA/SS who had a free hand to live out their antisemitism. Over the course of the 1930s, men of Jewish origin were arrested on different pretenses (such as racial defilement, Chapter 2) or as a means to compel them to transfer their properties and businesses to the state or individual Nazi authorities. Finally, commencing in the summer of 1938, the Nazis drafted an impromptu policy that meant to push for expedited Jewish emigration through the methods of intimidation, arrest and brutalization. By first deporting and then brutalizing Jewish men in sealed-off camps, the Nazis hoped to force larger numbers of German Jews to intensify their attempts to move abroad. The Nazis thus used protective custody – a Nazi euphemism for imprisonment in a concentration camp – in arbitrary ways to exclude Jews from the people’s community.

Witness accounts elucidate the suffering that Jewish men in German concentration camps prior to 1939 endured. Many accounts, in fact, recount how violence and torture started

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82 Nikolaus Wachsmann, “The Dynamics of Destruction: The Development of the Concentration Camps, 1933-1945,” in Nazi Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories, eds. Nikolaus Wachsmann & Jane Caplan (London: Routledge, 2009), 25. For primary sources, see Max Fürst, Gefilte Fisch und wie es weiterging (Munich: DTV, 2004). In his memoir, Fürst (1907-1978), who was not Jewish, provides a detailed account of the additional torture and hardship Jewish inmates in the concentration camp Oranienburg had to endure in 1933/1934. An earlier account of Jews being tortured in 1933/34 is by the theatre director Wolfgang Langhoff (1901-1966) who was imprisoned in the concentration camps Börgermoor and Lichtenburg. See Wolfgang Langhoff, Die Moorsoldaten: 13 Monate KZ (Zurich: Schweizer Spiegel Verlag 1935).

83 Arnold Bernstein (1888-1971), for instance, founder of the shipping company Bernstein Line in 1911 and later owner of the Red Star Line, another shipping company that transported goods from Antwerp to New York, was suddenly arrested on January 27, 1937, a relatively peaceful year for German Jews, under the pretense of custom fraud. Despite his protestation and intervention by his lawyer, Bernstein was only released under the condition of transferring all the shares he possessed in his two companies to a trustee of the state. See Arnold Bernstein, “Das Ende der Bernstein Linie,” in Sie durften nicht mehr Deutsche sein: Jüdischer Alltag in Selbstzeugnissen, 1933-1938, eds. Margarete Limberg & Hubert Rübsaat (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1990), 104-114.

84 Wünschmann, Before Auschwitz, 43-45. For arbitrary arrests of Jewish men see pp. 45-53. For instance, Korman Rosenbusch of Dettelbach, a village in Franconia, was arrested in March 1933, years prior to the passing of the Nuremberg Race Laws because of his behavior as a Jew toward the female sex. Allegedly, he had outraged the public, and he was sentenced to two years of imprisonment in Dachau “for his own protection.” The cattle dealer Josef Wachenheimer living in the village of Biebesheim was arrested in June 1933. Following a denunciation for illegal usury (Wachenheimer allegedly had charged excessive interest rates to the gentile farming community), the accused was deported to the nearby Osthofen concentration camp.
immediately following arrest, even preceding the arrival in the camp. In the early years of the Third Reich, it was a degrading custom to march or drive the arrested men through town on their way to the concentration camps (or train stations), in order to showcase them in public and inflict further humiliation on these formerly respected, integrated working professionals. In his 1941 account, Peter Wallner provides a grisly account of the beatings and humiliations he and his peers suffered in a train while in transit to Dachau, and Emil Schorsch (1899-1982) remembered that even before arriving in Buchenwald, many Jewish men were single-handedly picked by the SS and beaten with sticks, “making the prisoners scream like wild animals.”

In the camps, men fared worse. Beatings, arbitrary and brutal punishments for all kinds of minor or alleged infractions, and murder, typically under the pretense of having been shot “while

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85 Harvey Newton (formerly known as Hermann Neustadt) recalled the verbal abuse of the people on the street who were watching the arrested march through town. See Erinnerungen an das KZ Buchenwald November-Dezember 1938 LBINY MMII22, 4.
87 Emil Schorsch, Memoirs, LBINY, ME575 MM67, 8.
trying to escape,“ were customary treatments of Jews and other prewar prisoners. Forced labor in unsafe conditions in places like stone quarries was so physically demanding that it resulted in the immediate deterioration of prisoners’ mental and physical health and a rampant increase in sickness (e.g. pneumonia and heart failure) and premature deaths. Inadequate nutrition and scandalous sanitary conditions aggravated the prisoners’ lot.

More specifically, common forms of physical oppression in camps included, as a Dachau prisoner reported, the incessant punitive drills (Strafexerzieren) that included running, jumping, rolling and crawling in the mud for hours, or the blatant opposite, standing still at attention, sometimes for more than ten hours. In all their forms of torture, the SS disregarded the prisoners’ age and physical condition. Older men had to perform like younger men; sick men with fever had to report for work like anyone else. Unequipped with proper clothing, the prisoners’ exposure to agonizing heat or freezing temperatures became major concerns with heat strokes and frostbite

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88 Technically, SS guards had no legal authority to kill camp prisoners unless it was used for the prevention of an escape. Guards, therefore, fabricated on death certificates that the perished prisoner was trying to escape.

89 It did not take until the postwar era for camp accounts to get published. Early accounts of concentration camp mistreatment were written by former inmates and escapees and typically published outside of Germany and smuggled back into Germany. They include Gerhardt Seger, *Oranienburg. Erster Authentischer Bericht eines aus dem KZ Geflüchteten* (Karlsbad, 1934); Max Abraham, *Juda Verrecke. Ein Rabbiner im Konzentrationslager* (Teplitz-Schönau: Verlagsanstalt, 1934); Anonymous, *Konzentrationslager: Ein Appell an das Gewissen der Welt! Ein Buch der Greuel. Die Opfer klagen an. Dachau, Brandenburg, Papenburg, Königstein, Lichtenstein, Colditz, Sachsenburg, Moringen, Hohnstein, Reichenbach, Sonnenburg* (Karlsbad: Graphia Verlag, 1934); Wolfgang Langhoff, *Die Moorsohldaten: 13 Monate KZ* (Zurich: Schweizer Spiegel Verlag, 1935); Kreszentia Mühsam, *Der Leidensweg Erich Mühsams* (Zurich: Mopr Verlag, 1935). In the early years, the Nazis were so preoccupied by their international reputation that they in turn published (unsuccessful) rebuttals to these first-generation witness accounts, including Werner Schäfer, *Konzentrationslager Oranienburg: Das Anti-Braun Buch über das erste deutsche Konzentrationslager* (Berlin, 1934) and Jakob Trachtenberg who selectively cites accounts by Jewish organizations such as the veterans organizations RfJ that in 1933 addressed foreign governments and dignitaries, defending Germany’s new government and trying to improve Germany’s international standing. See Jakob Trachtenberg, *Die Greuelpropaganda ist eine Lügenpropaganda sagen die Juden selbst!* (Berlin: Jakob Trachtenberg Verlag, 1933). See also Paul Moore, “‘The Truth about the Concentration Camps’: Werner Schäfer’s *Anti-Brown Book* and the Transnational Debate on early Nazi Terror,” *German History*, Vol. 34 No. 4 (December 2016): 579-607.

90 The drastic loss of weight was universally shared by all prisoners. Frederick Weil asserted that he had lost 42 pounds in four weeks. See Weil, *Justitia*, 109.
common. Herbert Luft (1907-1992) of Essen recalled that when a prisoner had escaped from Buchenwald in 1938, all 16,000 inmates had to stand at attention for hours.

Our stomach reminds us that it must be lunch time... but we are still standing in line at attention like a wall of stone. Silently, we await our fate.... It is afternoon, the sun goes down and it is night. Three shifts of SS Verfügungstruppen [guards] have changed but we haven’t moved an inch... Again, it is midnight. We are victims of a game, a vile game called “How to murder legally!” Many of our comrades lie freezing in the snow, slowly dying. The guards are sleepy, bored and tired of beating their prisoners. It is hard to visualize what it means to be on your feet at rigid attention for 24 hours, hands straight down, without being allowed to move even a quarter of an inch. An inexorable cold in these high mountains adds to our suffering. We lose perceptive power and feel only an ice-cold emptiness inside. Our body is so paralyzed that we could not move were we ordered to do so... In heaven’s name, there is a limit to what a man can stand – a limit to the value of life. Tonight, we are waiting for an end to it all. In our minds, nothing remains but the wish “Let’s have it over with.” In the early dawn our resistance is at the breaking point. It seems no one can possibly survive. The SS officers, drunk in their canteen, make bets on how long human beings can stand this mortal game... It ends at 11 pm when the prisoners get caught.\(^{91}\)

In a similar vein, Kurt Juster recalled of his time in Sachsenhausen that worse than the incessant physical punishments was the 19-hour-long standing exercise.\(^{92}\) Another man’s account of Sachsenhausen testified that in order to resist the frigid temperatures, prisoners used towels and newspapers around their bodies, until this too was forbidden.\(^{93}\) Louis Gumpert, who fell victim to the June pogroms of 1938 and was interned in Buchenwald from mid-June to the end of August, recalled that the thirst was unbearable. He estimated that 150 to 180 people died during his summer stay in Buchenwald.\(^{94}\) Nighttime in the camps was no less painful. It was strictly forbidden to use the outhouse at night, an anguish to the many who suffered from diarrhea due to the contaminated drinking water.

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\(^{92}\) Anonymous, “B77,” in Novemberpogrom, 520.

\(^{93}\) Anonymous, “B323,” in Novemberpogrom, 605. See also Schwerin, Memoir, 68.

\(^{94}\) Anonymous, “B174,” in Novemberpogrom, 81. Buchenwald was located in a forested, elevated area (near Weimar) and was cut from direct water sources. Water had to be brought in daily by water trucks. Thus, water was severely restricted for prisoner consumption.
5. Violence and Jewish Masculinities

The gendered significance of such violence is that it was almost entirely (Jewish) men who were affected. As Kim Wünschmann has shown, the sources suggest that female prisoners in female camps like Moringen were also subject to violence, but that “they suffered primarily from their isolation in the camp, the uncertainty of release, and constant worries about their families.” It can be plausibly inferred therefore that the amount of pain and violence the Nazi terror system inflicted on Jewish and other men in the prewar years served as a testing ground for the personnel to become accustomed to performing murderous crimes, “skill sets” that they later during the war and abroad in foreign environments extended to women and children as well.

In the meantime, however, Jewish men’s victimization constituted a bodily experience that had a profound impact on their masculine identity. As the dominant model of masculinity in Nazi Germany was defined by athletic, strong “Aryan” bodies that were trained and hardened to weather any storm in order to fight Germany’s adversaries, the Jewish experience stood diametrically opposed to this ideal. The body image of the weak, dirty and diseased male was not only associated with images of unmanly men, but specifically with Jewish emasculated men. As Sabine Kienitz has analyzed in her study on World War I veterans and their injuries in Weimar Germany, the body and gender are intricately interconnected as cultural systems of meaning. A healthy body represents authority; a dismembered, unhealthy body questions masculinity. A distorted, unhealthy male body is deemed as incapable of fulfilling the tasks that define manhood: procreation, protection and provision through labor. Furthermore, as Christopher Forth has explained, in cultural and scientific discourses starting in the 19th century the body was also assigned moral

95 Wünschmann, *Before Auschwitz*, 120.
character traits. A healthy body was equated with proper moral traits and manners – such as courage, steadfastness and discipline – while the unhealthy body, which the Nazis first discursively constructed in their propaganda and then tried to translate into reality in their camps, was equated with alienating and perilous traits. Because Jews allegedly had lax, flabby bodies that they did not use to manufacture things, their minds were described as those of manipulative and lazy cowards. In their euphemistic language, the Nazis tried to overcome these Jewish deficiencies with their re-education camps [Erziehungslager]. Instead of masculinizing Jewish men, however, by violating and maltreating their bodies (and psyches), often leading to outright murder, the Nazis, if anything, dehumanized and emasculated them.

As the Nazis pretended to deconstruct the Jewish body, in addition to the bodily suffering Jewish men had to endure in the camps, various verbal and symbolic forms of torture were inflicted on Jewish men. In many contemporary reports, witnesses recalled how they had become puppets of SS despotism and capriciousness. Jewish men had to dance and sing in front of their torturers. Sporting events were organized where prisoners had to do frog-jumping in a kneeling position or go “bicycling,” a term used to describe running up and down stairs until the “contestant” fainted. When a prisoner asked for water, he could be forced to lick the spit of his torturers. Cleaning outhouses was also usually “reserved” for Jewish inmates, who had to use their bare hands or toothbrushes. Max Tabaschnik (b. 1893) recalled how he once had to eat pork and another time salty bread that caused an insurmountable thirst. Hans Reichmann recounted common verbal abuse:

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We had to stand in formation. Once in a while you would receive a slap in the face, but the derision hurt me deeper. “What is your profession?... Have you ever worked? We will teach you, you dirt-bags. Here you will learn what work means, you pig.”

For Reichmann, as for many other Jewish men, his profession was a central part of his gender identity. Being ridiculed by the primitive language (in this case with a Bavarian accent) of his tormentor who was much younger and was clearly uneducated, was for Reichmann a painful experience. Not only did Jewish men face serious existential challenges resulting from their loss of work, but as prisoners in concentration camps, they were treated as lazy and thus unmanly men who apparently had never learned a real, laborious profession. As concentration camps were euphemistically coined as educational camps, Jewish men who in reality had achieved a full status of masculinity defined by work achievements and successful provisioning for their families were degraded to the status of pupils who seemingly needed rigid supervision in athletic training and moral education. As the defining markers of masculinity in German society were shifting – from bourgeois values such as humanistic Bildung and economic wealth to physical fitness and military-like behaviors – Jewish men in concentration camps were effectively emasculated. While the SS performed an exhibitionist hyper-masculinity in front of their prisoners, Jewish men were reduced to child-like, dependent figures who required patriarchal parenting. The verbal and physical forms of violence Jewish men were subjected to were meant to harden them. Teaching them to become fit and able to endure physical hardship, the SS directly challenged the definitions of Jewish masculinity, and in cases when “Aryan” and Jewish masculinities overlapped, such as in the common adherence to military masculinity, the Nazis simply questioned or negated Jewish veterans’ spiritual belonging to the soldiers’ community.

Forms of verbal disrespect and being subjected to harsh treatment manifested in different ways. The German-language address Du was deliberately used by the SS instead of Sie, the customary polite form to address a stranger.\(^\text{100}\) Franz Memelsdorff remembered how in the shower rooms, with ice cold water running over their bodies, they were ridiculed by the guards as dirty pigs who had never seen a shower before, a stereotypical reference to the antisemitic discourse of a Jewish lack of hygiene. Another common verbal insult was the Nazi reference to Jews as fat pigs, connoting a luxurious, affluent lifestyle that all Jews supposedly indulged in. “You gorged pigs, you will lose your fat here and then your clothes [Sachen] will fit you.”\(^\text{101}\) Though Memelsdorff suffered from the incessant beatings and exposure to the cold weather (he had lost a toe), the cultural mockery, the symbolic forms of discrimination and indirect violence were equally if not more degrading to him, especially the inhumane lack of hygiene they were exposed to:

> Our clothes were old and patched... At first, we had to wear them for two weeks, only then were they changed. It was an unimaginable mess [Schweinerei]. Because we had to keep them on also at night, and many of us could not wash ourselves properly, the clothes stank terribly.\(^\text{102}\)

The Nazis, in their attempts to dehumanize German Jews, deliberately tried to deprive Jewish male inmates in concentration camps of their identities as humans and thereby also as men. Making them feel like and live the life of animals in unsanitary conditions reflected the propaganda imagery that had been previously established and that had depicted Jews as an ominous, racial threat to the purity and health of the nation. The discourse of racial defilement, as discussed in chapter 2, heavily relied on such cultural constructs of Jewish dirtiness. In concentration camps, the Nazis embedded a validation to their beliefs, real-life examples of Jews living in filthy

\(^{100}\) Anonymous, “B77,” in Novemberpogrom, 572.
\(^{101}\) Memelsdorff, Erinnerungsbericht, 38.
\(^{102}\) Ibid., 49. Trans. S. Huebel.
conditions who were ostensibly too inept to clean up after themselves. Instead of improving sanitary conditions in the camp, the camp authorities had prisoners shave their hair to prevent the spread of lice and other parasites.\textsuperscript{103} Prior to doing so, however, and taking matters to the extreme, the staff of the \textit{Der Stürmer} and other journals photographed the filthy, unkempt men as living proof of how Jews were cultural aliens with untrustworthy characters and diseased bodies.\textsuperscript{104}

Obviously, being deported to and incarcerated in a camp and subsequently treated as criminals was a psychologically and physically injurious experience. Living in an environment of omnipresent violence and inhumane conditions made many men despair. Carl Schwabe (1891-1967) recalled a typical night in his barracks:

\begin{quote}
The nights were terrible. Hysterics suffered from seizures [\textit{Attacken}]. One guy was screaming he was going to get killed, another was preaching a sermon. A third was talking about electric waves. In between, more screaming, crying...\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

Another contemporary account wrote about a case of mental disturbance:

\begin{quote}
An elderly gentleman screamed suddenly “Jews help me! They are coming after me [\textit{man will mir an den Kragen}].” He couldn’t stay on his pallet [\textit{Pritsche}] and started walking around, intermittently screaming “They are after my life.” Eventually, one of the older prisoners dealt with him. “You shut up now, or I’ll slap you.” “But they are after me.” Another warning followed, and when the old guy again screamed, he was punched in his face so that he stumbled over several men sleeping on the floor, falling against the oven, which he almost toppled, but behind which he immediately hid. He started to scream again right away that they were after his life... Then four men beat his head non-stop for about a minute, which turned his head into a blue-black mass that made it impossible to distinguish nose from eye. The old guy was half-conscious and of course silent. There was a sense
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{103} Siegfried Oppenheimer recalled that becoming hairless and beardless meant it happen that he could not recognize some of his acquaintances. When someone started talking to him, Oppenheimer did not recognize the person, upon which Rabbi Kunstadt of Fulda, the unrecognized acquaintance, started to cry. Siegfried Oppenheimer, \textit{Meine Erlebnisse am 10. November 1938 und mein Aufenthalt in Buchenwald bis zu meiner Rückkehr am 14.12. nach Bad Nauheim}, LBINY ME448 MM61, 5.

\textsuperscript{104} Memelsdorff remembered how the \textit{Stürmer} photographers singled out Jewish-looking individuals who, of course made a negative impression as they had not been able to shave for days and were improperly dressed in unfitting rags that had been worn to the threads. “That was true Goebbels propaganda. Herr Propaganda Minister obviously wanted to tell the \textit{Volk} ‘See here, this is how Jews look like when they are not wearing their elegant suits. And the National Socialist state takes cares of these racial aliens by accommodating and catering to them.’” Memelsdorff, \textit{Erinnerungsbericht}, 74. Trans. S. Huebel. See also Schwerin \textit{Memoirs}, 80.

\textsuperscript{105} Carl Schwabe, \textit{Memoir}, LBINY, ME586 MM68, 76-77. Trans. S. Huebel.
of contentment in the barrack. “We have brought many to silence who refused. We have our own methods. If it is inevitable, then one has to bite the dust instead of 1000 or 2000 having to suffer.” After about half an hour the old man recovered in as much as he started to scream “Let me live,” whereas the same as before happened. The old guy was of incredible resilience and endured this procedure a few times…but it could not have lasted much longer.\footnote{Anonymous, “B82,” in \textit{Novemberpogrom}, 493. Trans. S. Huebel.}

Survivor testimonies illustrate how violence and degradation were experienced differently by every individual. One report recalled that in the camp, first the weakest, and then the second weakest perished. “Of course, most deaths occurred among the old people.”\footnote{Anonymous, “B184,” in \textit{Novemberpogrom}, 558.} Another witness wrote:

The older, less mobile prisoners were subjected to particular cruelties. From old people who typically had made something of themselves as businessmen, civil servants, academics and intellectuals, more was expected than from young, healthy eighteen-year olds in the most regimented army in the world.\footnote{Anonymous, “B328,” in \textit{Novemberpogrom}, 53. Trans. S. Huebel.}

Prisoner victimization occurred not always for the same reasons but could vary dramatically. The SS used stereotypical markers of Jewishness to single out their victims. The SS picked on Jewish-looking, overweight and wealthy men as the representation of the archetypical Jew, defined by physical (typically facial) features and a wealthy, affluent lifestyle evinced by obesity. As the same witness recalled: “Being an intellectual was a particular stigma. The wearer of glasses [\textit{Brillenträger}] were especially mistreated [\textit{aufs Korn genommen}].”\footnote{Ibid., 53.} Alfred Schwerin recalled that upon arrival in Dachau, a fellow who had previously been imprisoned warned that the SS could not stand prisoners with glasses and advised him to better take them off.\footnote{Schwerin, \textit{Memoir}, 45.} Another witness recalled:

The overweight, the clumsy and especially the Jewish-looking ones had to suffer the most. Our tormentors seemingly knew the Jew only from \textit{Der Stürmer} and \textit{Das Schwarze Korps}, whose jargon they perpetually used and whose words they
carefully tried to translate into deeds. They lunged at anyone who reminded them of these magazines.111

Another marker the SS used was Jewish men’s military records. As Christopher Dillon has argued, the SS in fact regarded Jewish men with military records “as a subversive threat to SS soldierly masculinity,” and that in turn provoked a reaction: “Strategies of emasculation and subjugation were developed to delegitimize models of masculinity among Jewish men.” In their attempt to emasculate Jewish men, the Nazis often met Jewish protestations of military service with sarcastic incredulity and outraged violence.112 A witness remembered:

Especially the former front-fighters and veterans among the Jewish prisoners are the targets of hatred. They do not want to believe that Jews too fulfilled their duty in Germany’s hardest time, during the war…They particularly hate those Jews who had been decorated for their bravery facing the enemy. They tear off their Iron Crosses and Badges of War Injury upon entering the camps, trample on them, and verbally abuse and mistreat them [the men]. These primitive tormentors [Folterknechte] in their black SS uniforms do not realize that they are simultaneously defiling German military honor.113

What makes all these horrendous stories of individual suffering so important is that, although hundreds if not more died in Germany’s prewar concentration camps, thousands of Jewish men returned after a few weeks or months to their “normal” lives with their wives and families. Violence, as the following sections will demonstrate, had a profound effect on men’s survival strategies and their coping mechanisms in the camps as well as the communication between men and their families.

112 Christopher Dillon, “‘Tolerance means weakness’: the Dachau Concentration Camp S.S., Militarism and Masculinity,” Historical Research 86, no. 232 (May 2013), 386.
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b) Effects of Violence on Jewish Masculinity and Gender Relations

The terror that Jewish men in concentration camps were exposed to took place in a micro-environment in which power relations and different conceptions of masculinity came head-to-head. While in the domestic and public sphere, Jewish masculinity has been constructed (though not exclusively) in relation to femininity, in Nazi concentration camps, the manifestations and meanings of Jewish masculinity crystallized in a relational context to “Aryan” masculinity. According to Jane Caplan, there was virtually an unbridgeable gulf between the de-masculinization of the inmates and the hyper-masculinization of their SS guards.”¹¹⁴ As prisoners, Jewish men identified themselves in relation to the behaviors and performance of the SS guards, including their unrestricted use of violence.¹¹⁵ For Jewish men, developing effective coping mechanisms incorporated observation, internalization and rejection of the divergent masculinity of the SS that Jewish men, though being outpowered, came to see as inferior.

Military Masculinity

As Thomas Kühne has shown, the Nazi state was a Männerbund, a homosocial association of males, in which Kampfgemeinschaft (community of fighting) was celebrated and according to which men were to acquire a tough, soldierly demeanor.¹¹⁶ German soldiers and the SS in particular were trained in self-control by suppressing emotions and other inhibitions in carrying

¹¹⁴ Caplan, “Gender and the Concentration Camps,” 99.
¹¹⁵ In her study on women in concentration camps, Gisela Bock similarly argued that for a gendered study of concentration camps, it is crucial to identify differences not between genders, male and female, but within genders, especially between male prison guards and male prisoners. See Bock, Genozid und Geschlecht, 19.
out their tasks. Camp guards were regularly drilled and those, as Christopher Dillon argues, who failed to conform to the standards of a militarized life and thus failed the ultimate test of manhood were held up to scorn and feminized as “crying little girls” and “sissies.” Nazi homophobia and misogynistic sexism were two sides of the same coin.

The Nazi school of violence was calculatedly harsh, designed to foster aggression and to overcome recruits’ inhibitions about using violence against others. It was expected that guards would cascade their wounded pride onto the prisoners. The inmates in turn were emasculated by the perpetrators, one component of the S.S. claim to… ‘absolute power’ in the concentration camps. The chasm between the hyper masculine status of the guards and the emasculation of the prisoners forms an under-researched aspect of the encoding of domination in the camps.

Filling in this gap of under-researched masculinity, I contend that although Jewish men were targeted in Nazi concentration camps, SS masculinity and Jewish masculinity were in a codependent, tense relationship (Spannungsverhältnis), and projecting their own masculinity vis-à-vis that of the SS, Jewish men found ways to preserve their gender identity.

Strikingly, in memoirs by former concentration camp prisoners, Jewish men habitually rejected and criticized the masculinity that SS men, often still of adolescent age, exhibited. Inflicting violence on helpless individuals was not the bravery and courageousness that Jewish men ascribed to military masculinity. Jewish men questioned the Nazi torturers’ membership in an honorable, spiritual association of male soldiers and veterans, and reviled them as low-class, uneducated ruffians who in their barbaric actions were led by animalistic instincts. A religious authority, Rabbi Dr. Nussbaum, who was interned in Sachsenhausen, partook of such condemnations of SS masculinity, describing the perpetrators as men who are “trained in all kinds

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118 Dillon, “‘Tolerance means weakness,’” 385.
119 Ibid., 386.
of Nazi elite military schools (*Ordensburgen*)… In my opinion [they] are never suited for war but for cowardly mistreatments of the defenseless.”

With SS guards depicted as un-soldierly cowards whose only “merit” was in directing their violent aggression against helpless men, it is hardly surprising that in turn, Jewish men resorted to a palette of contrasting behaviors that they associated with humanistic, civic virtues and honorable military masculinity. As in the public sphere when their honor and reputation as righteous citizens and former veterans were questioned (Chapter 1), in concentration camps too Jewish men actively referred to their wartime sacrifices to the country and their adherence to what they considered honorable military masculinity. Their references to the war and their soldierly behavior in Nazi prison camps, therefore, constituted an idiosyncratically and gendered coping mechanism that helped Jewish men to preserve themselves as dignified men in an environment that tried to deprive them of such. It helped distinguish themselves from the pseudo-military habitus, as Wünschmann enunciated it, that Jewish men saw as a cheap imitation of honorable soldierly behavior. Jewish men sought to save the masculine integrity that they had earned in the military by interpreting the camp experience in the models and vocabulary of the trenches. It was a trial of manhood. The construction and cultivation of Jewish masculinity in camps in Nazi Germany was thus contingent on the rival conceptions of masculinity by the SS. In their reports and memoirs, Jewish men resorted to means of “doing gender,” attempts to reassert themselves a sense of manliness by discrediting the false masculinity of the Nazis and reappraising their own.

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122 Dillon, “Tolerance means weakness,” 388.
123 Central to conceptualizing a generic model of masculinity is a trial of tests that men must pass, according to David Gilmore in his seminal work *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).
Jewish men who had learned the military drill in Wilhelmine barracks and had participated in the war made two related yet distinct uses of military masculinity as a coping mechanism. On the one hand, many memoirists claim that their previous military experience in the war had made them better suited to endure physical hardship, such as the military drills and the daily mustering on the Appellplatz. Military masculinity had hardened Jewish men and their bodies. On the other hand, military masculinity was used as a spiritual code of behavior, a guide book of principles that helped Jewish men better tolerate and process the indignities inflicted on them. References to steadfast behavior, of toughened men acting stoically in perilous situations were used – as part of coping mechanisms in the camp and as memory constructions afterward – to make the seemingly powerless, emasculated and degraded appear as true men. Military prisoner behavior, in other words, was of fundamental importance in the context of gender identity. As Brian Feltman has argued, German POWs in the post-World War I period “believed their response to captivity would say much about their national character and identity as men.”

After realizing that he and other men were being deported to Dachau by train, Alfred Schwerin recalled:

Keeping your composure [Haltung] was the best thing to do. Don’t let them see into you [Nur nichts anmerken lassen!]. And everyone kept up their composures, these poor, tortured and hounded people. Muted and stiff, they were sitting there, gritting their teeth.

Once inside the KZ, militarized behavior was paramount for having a chance of survival as Schwerin observed:

A Scharführer [section-leader] read out our names, and we tried now as well as later on, to exhibit a military composure [militärische Haltung zur Schau stellen] because we reckoned that only by being soldierly-stiff [das Stramm-Soldatische]

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could we keep the tempers of our new rulers [Gebieter] in a smooth balance [sanfte Gleichgewicht].

A military attitude and composure, as Schwerin suggested, was a paradigmatic response pattern by many Jewish men who in their uncertainty relied on past behaviors and the cultural norms that they had learned and that had helped them endure situations of adversity in World War I. Furthermore, as astute observers of SS behaviors, many male prisoners realized that acting in a military way was what was expected of them. In fact, Jewish men’s resorting to military masculinity can be partially interpreted as an expected adaptation to Nazi behaviors, despite the Nazis’ belittling of Jewish men’s war contribution. Through stoic in outward appearance and bodily composure, the Jewish veteran performed the role of a rock that could not be uprooted by arbitrary Nazi assaults. Rabbi Schorsch remembered how he as a veteran, in fact, could quite easily bear the imprisonment in the city jail before his deportation to Buchenwald. Harvey Newtown (b. 1920) in his 1995 memoir described how he endured physical pain in Buchenwald. After an SS guard had hurt him.

I stood at attention and submitted to it [ließ es über mich ergehen]. After a while, it was no more fun for the guard and he let go of me. I do not want to imagine what could have happened if I had shown any signs of pain, because it would have been a provocation [Herausforderung] for the SS to inflict more pain on me.

In another report, written shortly after his release, a witness wrote:

There was much confusion due to conflicting orders. If someone made a mistake, he was hit with a wooden bar or baton [Holzknüppel]. If the concerned was a soldier, then he clicked his heels [Hacken zusammennehmen] and shut up [Maul halten]. Then everything was fine. But if he did not stand to attention, or tried in an

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128 For instance, reports recalled that when Jews were arrested in 1938 (both in March and November) Jewish men had to perform military exercises and gymnastics on the street, while others, women included, had to clean up the streets and the mess of the pogroms. Often groups of Jewish men were also organized in military formations to march to the train stations. The Nazi pressure to conform to military expectations, therefore, was not necessarily restricted to the sealed-off concentration camps. See Anonymous, “B189” in Novemberpogrom, 736-739.
129 Schorsch, Memoir, p. 8.
unsoldierly manner to explain the misunderstanding or apologize, more slashes with the bar followed and it was up to fate or the mood of the torturer if the slashes were stronger or a bit weaker…

Evidently, military masculinity helped Jewish men adapt to the expectations of camp life and yield a more enduring, bearable experience in the camp. As former soldiers, many knew how to adapt to military authorities and institutions. Tacitly tolerating the pain that was inflicted on them, without showing signs of weakness, was part of this gendered behavior. As veterans, they had been accustomed to a gender code of behavior according to which a soldierly man was not to crumble in the presence of his enemy. As the second example suggests, the military-like adaption to the SS monopoly of violence by conforming to the rules of the SS could lead to being less exposed to violence, whereas diametrically opposed forms of behavior, such as explaining, arguing with or apologizing to their superiors, generated more violence. This shift in values and behaviors was situationally contingent and is central to comprehending men’s experience in the camps. Not “standing their ground” in a sense of negotiation and communication, as Jewish man had done before – such as during the April 1933 boycott when Jewish men had disseminated leaflets that outlined their military records or talked to passersby on the street – was now the right, masculine thing to do. In the camps, it was strict military obedience and discipline that were regarded as prudent means by which to survive. In short, Jewish men who had previously participated in militarized environments such as barracks, military training and war felt better prepared in their behavioral adaptations to endure their time in concentration camps.

An adherence to military masculinity did not require past participation in a war, however. The internalization of military values like physical discipline, obedience, robustness, stoicism and steadfastness sufficed. Younger men who had not been trained in the military could still have

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observed and copied the practice of military masculinity by older role model comrades. Harry Ross recalled how he had grown up with a military-style father at home. He and his brother had to wear boots, even at home. As during his arrest, he fared better than everyone else with weak feet. As discipline, hardness and perseverance were also characteristics that resonated in the world of sports, athletes of younger age later remembered that they too fared relatively well during their imprisonments. Max Heimann recalled that in Dachau he was up to the physical chicaneries as he was an athlete. Ross’s athletic body also helped him to carry bricks, cement bags and salt bags of 112 pounds on his back. A member in a Jewish sports club of the veterans’ organization RjF, he recalled that “I was so glad that I did sports as a young man.”

Another crucial element of military masculinity, in addition to the mental and physical level of preparedness of individual Jewish men, was the sense of belonging and shared endurance. Most witness accounts refer to fellow prisoner inmates as comrades. The experience of comradeship, in the camps, was constructed as a parallel to Jewish men’s military past that similarly had created a spirit of soldierly community. Male bonding in 1920s veterans’ organizations, Freikorps units and other associations constituted a male-exclusive sphere of belonging. Continuing to live this spirit in Nazi camps was a gendered form of behavior that helped Jewish men better cope with their fate. As they had together endured hardship in the trenches of World War I, they again felt a sense of safety in the presence of congenial brethren. As one witness

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133 Harry Ross, “Interview Transcript,” Gedenstätte Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen, p. 8. Veronika Springmann has similarly argued that age, bodily strength and health were crucial factors for camp survival. In her study on camp boxing that the best chance to survive concentration camp imprisonment was bodily strength and the demonstration thereof. Athletic men who could demonstrate virility, physical strength and control were more respected and better treated by the SS. See Veronika Springmann, “Boxen im Konzentrationslager. Erzählmuster und Interpretationen,” in Männlichkeitskonstruktionen im Nationalsozialismus: Formen, Funktionen und Wirkungsmacht von Geschlechterkonstruktionen im Nationalsozialismus und ihre Reflexion in der pädagogischen Praxis, eds. Anette Dietrich & Ljiljana Heisse (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013), 185-199.
recalled, in the camp he belonged to the world’s largest Jewish paramilitary formation. “The massiveness \([\text{Massenhaftigkeit}]\) certainly gave everyone a sense of security, a sense of togetherness \([\text{Zusammengehörigkeit}]\).”134 Strikingly, this informal network of comradeship, like their adherence to military masculinity continued after Jewish men’s internments.135

![Fig. 28. Newly arrived prisoners, with shaven-heads, stand at attention in their civilian clothes during a roll call in the Buchenwald concentration camp, November 1938.](image)

The commonly experienced sense of comradeship and the performance of military masculinity did not deteriorate over time. Though continuously exposed to violence, torment and harsh weather conditions, men upheld what they considered to be masculine hardiness and military acts of behavior to the very end. Karl Guggenheim (b. 1879) amusingly remembered the day of his and his comrades’ release:

135 See in Chapter 1, for instance, Klemperer’s memorable quote that described Jewish men in an air raid cellar during World War II, talking about World War I. Signs of comradeship also included favors done by men who were released on behalf of fellow mates who had to stay behind. Arthur Propp (1890-1965), for instance, recalled that he had a long list of addresses of families or wives that he had to visit and that he had to bring forward greetings from their still-imprisoned husbands, “I promised each one I would do what he asked.”. See Arthur Propp, “November 1938 in Königsberg,” ed. Christopher R. Friedrichs, \textit{Midstream} 33, no. 2 (February 1987), 51. Likewise, Alfred Schwerin asked a fellow prisoner from his hometown to purchase a bar of chocolate for his daughter. Schwerin, \textit{Memoir}, 88.
Suddenly a command was issued from the middle of the crowd: “March in formation” – and a battle-ready Jewish company of veterans marched in impeccable parade cadence through the gates of the concentration camp – leaving behind there the shocked and dumbfounded faces of the camp guards and the barely concealed smiles of the camp inmates. Even the noble knight Götz von Berlichingen could not have bid a more suitable farewell.¹³⁶

How central the new military zeitgeist had become in Nazi Germany became evident when Jewish war veterans – despite being subject to occasional additional mockery in the camps – were the first to be released, starting a few weeks after their imprisonments, likely a call made by Hermann Göring, second in the state hierarchy, also a veteran and celebrated war hero. To document their war service, many Jewish men arrested after Kristallnacht had foresightedly taken the military service badges (Frontkämpferabzeichen) that had been awarded to them a few years earlier by Hitler’s government. Others wrote with much urgency to their wives to mail them their military papers.¹³⁷ For Jewish men, it was a sign of confirmation that adhering to military behaviors and standards would eventually pay off. While other men had to wait several more months for their release, the men best prepared to endure camp life were the first to let go.

Despite the utility and the benefits of personifying a military masculine identity in the camps (and before) that was widely shared among male veteran inmates, the camp experience was a horrendous, excruciating ordeal which every inmate experienced differently. While many Jewish men could resort to military masculinity when approaching camp life, other men who either had had no prior experience of regimented military culture or who could not identify with things military, had, without a doubt, a much harder time. Alfred Schwerin recalled that he had never seen so many men cry.¹³⁸ Jewish gender experience and the negotiation of identities in the camps,

¹³⁶ Karl Guggenheim, quoted in Gregory Caplan, “Wicked Sons, German Heroes: Jewish Soldiers, Veterans and Memoirs of World War I in Germany” PhD Dissertation (Georgetown University, 2001), 313.
¹³⁷ See for instance, Newton, Erinnerungen, 10; and Oppenheimer, Meine Erlebnisse, 13.
¹³⁸ Schwerin, Memoir, 87.
thus, needs to be understood not only along a bipolar canvas of Aryan vs. Jewish masculinity and with single, unilateral response strategies such as military masculinity. Rather, Jewish masculinity in concentration camps must further differentiate the different groups of Jewish male prisoners. Different gendered experiences and response strategies such as military masculinity could make a positive difference but other manifestations of manhood, such as the concepts of fatherhood and marriage, were also of crucial importance.

Jewish Husbands and Fathers in Concentration Camps

Though the preservation of a military gender identity was an essential coping mechanism for many Jewish men, it was not the only one. An analysis of Jewish men in concentration camps and their relations to the outside world reveals that they further preserved their gender identities by continuing to perform, or at least trying to perform, roles as the heads of and providers for their families as well as the roles of husbands and fathers.

Marion Kaplan has shown how Jewish women in the Third Reich undertook rescue efforts in trying to get their husbands out of imprisonment and sending them abroad. Wives and other family members played an invaluable role, especially in the context of emigration. Historians agree that the November 1938 arrest of thousands of men was meant to further Jewish emigration efforts. Hans Reichmann recalled that in the camps, “most of us … had only one thought: to emigrate in

139 As Kaplan plausibly argued, Jewish families in Nazi Germany saw it as more prudent to get their husbands and fathers out of Germany first as Jewish men were generally regarded to be at much higher risk. In her work, Kaplan cites Alice Nauen, who in her memoir recalled: “Should we send the men out first? This had been the dilemma all along... If you had two tickets, do you take one man out of the concentration camp and his wife who is at the moment safe? Or do you take your two men of the concentration camp?” Even as women feared for their men, they believed that they themselves would be spared serious harm by the Nazis. See Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 140. In my own research, I came across the case of Siegbert Freiberg, who in an interview recalled that his step-mother, who was Jewish, gave her ticket to go abroad to a Jewish man who like her husband had been imprisoned in concentration camps. Siegbert’s father survived the war in Shanghai. Siegbert (b. 1923) managed, with much luck, to survive an illegal underground existence in Berlin. His stepmother was killed in Auschwitz. See Siegbert Freiberg, “Oral Interview” USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.
order to get out of here.”140 Often, Jewish men were only released as a result of their wives’ or mothers’ relentless negotiations with the Nazi bureaucracy and their compliance in obtaining visas that entitled their husbands’ emigration.141

Such insights are important in shedding light not only on women’s emotional turmoil following their husbands’ and sons’ arrests, but also on their active involvement in saving their men. Yet, they do not sufficiently offer insights about men’s perspectives on being cut off from their families. Through an analysis of letter exchanges between Jewish men in concentration camps and their families outside, two general patterns of behavior are noticeable. On the one hand, Jewish men in their letters to their wives and children continued to provide advice and care to their families; and on the other hand, they received important support from their families. Unlike Anna-Madeleine Halkes-Carey, who argued that for Jewish men the “practice of gender roles in concentration camps was near impossible,”142 the following analysis with its focus on the often-neglected prewar years will demonstrate that even in these circumstances, German-Jewish men were remarkably resilient and successful in performing their roles as heads of their families.

First, in the correspondence between Jewish men and their families as well as in memoirs and witness accounts, it is noticeable that Jewish men – despite being victims – thought about, if not worried about, their families’ well-being. Frederick Weil (b. 1877), imprisoned in Buchenwald

140 Reichmann, Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude, 164.
141 See Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair, 140. Instances I have come across in my research include the following. Hans Kuttner’s father was only released from Sachsenhausen after his wife had organized emigration papers to Peru. The siblings Erich and Inge Rose who both had left for the U.S. corresponded in November 1938 regarding their father’s desired release by trying to obtain immigration papers for their father. See Harry Kuttner, “Interview Transcript,” P3 Hans Hermann Kuttner, Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen; Inge Rose, “Letter to Erich Rose,” Sammlung Familie Rose, JMB, Dok. 2013/430/374, K790, Folder 10.
in 1938, remembered how at night he was constantly thinking about his wife and children.\textsuperscript{[143]} The rabbi Max Abraham, who was severely mistreated, wrote in an early account:

\begin{quote}
I did not think I would get out of here alive… I no longer feared death. Only the thought of my bride caused some tormenting concern in me… She was without any protection.\textsuperscript{[144]}
\end{quote}

Abraham likely would not have been able to extend physical protection to his wife, shielding her from possible Nazi assault if he was released, but it is striking that he, the imprisoned, still responded emotionally in his supposed protector role. Concerns for one’s family could also be directed to elderly parents and other relatives for whom young men felt responsible. Otto Schenkelbach (1914-1985), imprisoned in 1938, strongly advised his father to get out of Germany while it was still possible. Though \textit{he} was the subject of imprisonment and possible serious mistreatment, it was he who forwarded safety advice. In a letter from Dachau from late September, 1938, Schenkelbach wrote:

\begin{quote}
I have received your letters… You cannot prevent me from worrying about you. For this reason, I am grateful that you write in such detail and spare me many questions. I am healthy and have my hopes for you… Papa, do not remain as the last one in Vienna. Do not be considerate of me [\textit{Nimm auf mich keine Rücksicht}]. It will be a great pleasure to get the news that none of you have remained in Vienna.\textsuperscript{[145]}
\end{quote}

More common than concerns over their families’ safety, however, were existential economic fears by Jewish men who quickly realized that without their incomes, their families would face serious problems. The dental technician Max Tabaschnik (b. 1893) recalled that not only did he have to pay six marks a day for the duration of his arrest, but that he was also no longer making any income. But “wife and children must live.”\textsuperscript{[146]} Herbert Löwy, arrested in November

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\textsuperscript{143} Weil, \textit{Justitia}, 82.  \\
\textsuperscript{144} Abraham, \textit{Juda Verrecke: Ein Rabbiner im Konzentrationslager}, 138. Trans. S. Huebel.  \\
\textsuperscript{145} Otto Schenkelbach, \textit{“Letter to Father, September 11, 1938,”} Schenkelbach/Feldbau Collection, USHMM AC2006.359.1. Trans. S. Huebel.  \\
\textsuperscript{146} Tabaschnik, \textit{“Königstein,”} 94.
\end{flushright}
1938, even interpreted his inability to provide for his family as deeply shameful.\textsuperscript{147} As Jewish men, traditionally the primary breadwinners, were cut off from earning incomes, financial concerns turned into serious problems. As one way out of this dilemma, as Reinhard Bendix recalled, the Bendix family cashed in on their life insurance, a measure to which his father, due to the interruption in fulfilling the provider role, agreed.\textsuperscript{148}

To counter pending financial and other problems, and to compensate for being in a helpless state, Jewish men offered advice to their families, trying to instill a sense of calmness, an important facet of masculinity. Men’s letters written to their families generally contained words of emotional encouragement and reassurance. Seldom were there any hidden references of torture detailing men’s suffering and pain. As signs of life, such letters were meant to convey a sense of well-being by Jewish men with the intention of making their families stop worrying.\textsuperscript{149} Though Jewish men harbored fears and concerns for their families, they generally did not relay such signs of concern. The politician Ludwig Marum (1885-1934) wrote to his family, “Don’t be afraid.”\textsuperscript{150} Oskar Richter wrote in his postcards and letters between November 18, 1938, and early January 1939 from Dachau that he was well and his family should not be concerned. “Be strong and brave. This separation will pass.”\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{149} In contemporary reports, men often acknowledged the fact that their wives had been left in the unknown about their fates and whereabouts and how tormenting this uncertainty had been for their families. See Anonymous, “B99,” “B114,” Schorsch, \textit{Memoirs}, 9. Utilizing dramatic language, in a contemporary account written in 1939 and published in 1945, the Austrian Julius Freund wrote that following his deportation to Buchenwald in the spring of 1938, his children were crying and looking for their father. His wife was missing her husband and provider (\textit{Ernährer}). See Julius Freund, \textit{O Buchenwald} (Klagenfurt: Selbstverlag, 1945), 17.
\textsuperscript{150} Ludwig Marum, \textit{Briefe aus dem KZ Kislau}, ed. Elisabeth Marum-Lunau & Jörg Schadt (Karlsruhe: Müller Verlag, 1988), 50.
From a more practical perspective, in their letters, men performed masculinity by exhibiting a functional sense of objectivity, persevering in their roles as protectors and mentors despite their forced absence from home. In the form of instructions and advice, Jewish men provided information to their wives on how to handle the situation without them. Günther Rosenthal (b.1904), for instance, cautioned his wife to properly declare her taxes and not confuse the tax categories. The author and activist Felix Fechenbach (1894-1933), already arrested in 1933, advised his wife not to be a burden to her relatives, where she and their two children were staying for the time being. He advised her to look for more affordable living quarters. Fechenbach further instructed his wife not to spend any money on him, but only on the family. Fechenbach felt relief when he learned that his wife had taken on a job in a kindergarten, addressing her as a “brave guy” (Du bist doch ein tapferer Kerl). Yet, his ardent wish remained the same: “My deepest wish is to again provide for all of you” (mein sehnnlichster Wunsch... wieder für Euch sorgen zu dürfen).

The political activist and writer Erich Mühsam (1878-1934) in early 1933 wrote to his wife: “One can start afresh with the age of 55.” Ludwig Marum exhibited similar optimism and a zest for work. To his wife in a letter on March 29, 1933, Marum wrote:

You, I and the children, we will box ourselves through this... If one day I no longer can work as a lawyer, I will find something else. I also don’t think yet that you should give up our apartment.

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153 Felix Fechenbach, Mein Herz schlägt weiter. Briefe aus der Schutzhaft, ed. Walter Victor (Passau: Alexander-Haller Verlag, 1987), 12-13. The manuscript was originally published 1936 by the Kultur Verlag St. Gallen. Supposed to be transferred to Dachau in August 1933, Fechenbach was murdered by SA/SS men in a forest.
154 Mühsam, Der Leidensweg Erich Mühsams, 25.
155 Marum, Briefe aus dem KZ Kislau, 50. Trans. S. Huebel.
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In a letter sent at the end of May, he reiterated, “I have the courage to live on and as before to take care of us and the children. Once I am free, I will again provide for us [unser Brot verdienen].”

Yet, despite his eagerness to fulfill his gender role as male provider and head of family, Marum had to acknowledge that the family suffered from his inability to make an income, and as a result, he eventually agreed to have his wife auction off furniture and other belongings that they had accumulated in over twenty-years of marriage and finally conceded to his family that moving into a different place to save money was necessary.

Though men like Marum were cut off from work and absent from their families, they retained considerable decision-making authority.

In addition to giving emotional and economic advice that typically focused on monetary issues or suggestions regarding expediting emigration, Jewish men tried to further fulfil roles as fathers. They kept their children, especially ones of younger age, protected from knowing about their father’s imprisonment. Fechenbach, in a letter to his wife, speculated that their children would not for much longer believe the fairy tale of him being gone, looking for work.

More important for Jewish fathers, however, even while they were incarcerated in concentration camps, was to get their children out of Germany. Especially after the sudden arrests in 1938, it was an urgent matter for Jewish fathers and their wives to move children to foreign lands that promised more safety. Though their wives had easier means to apply for emigration and register their children with aid programs, Jewish fathers did not remain idle. In letters to foreign aid organizations, Jewish men begged for support to take their children. In one such letter

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156 Ibid., 74. He repeated his zest for working and providing for his family a few weeks later, in early June. See page 76. In early July, he stated that he was looking forward to working again, as he was getting “rusty.” See page 84. Marum was murdered in KZ Kislau in March 1934.

157 Ibid, 77, 82.

158 Fechenbach, Mein Herz schlägt weiter, 51. In a similar fashion, Hertha Nathorff, according to the diary, responded to her child’s recurring questions about her father’s whereabouts, following his arrest in November 1938, by explaining that her father was participating in a major military exercise that could last a few weeks. Nathorff, Tagebücher, 125-127.
addressed to a refugee organization for children in Amsterdam (Kinderkommittee), the author wrote:

I do not know if this letter will reach you. I have sacrificed my last chattels for the delivery [of this letter] … My name is A., am living in M. I have a wife and six children aged three to fourteen. I am Jewish and stateless. Please save us! It is urgent.159

The widower Hirsch Schulmann (b. 1893) explained in a letter from January 15, 1939 sent from Dachau to his daughter Sonja (b. 1927) how he had been preoccupied with his daughter’s emigration. He had signed a power of attorney (Vollmacht) from the orphanage that would enable her participation in a Kindertransport.160

Finally, while severely restricted in their attempts to sustain their gender roles as providers and protectors, Jewish men were still keen on preserving their emotional relationships in their letters to their loved ones and making their lives more tolerable. In numerous letters, Fechenbach wrote how he dearly he missed his family. “I miss the children a lot and my longing for you is growing with the enduring separation.”161 He regretted not seeing his children grow up and to partially compensate for this, being a gifted writer, he composed poems and lullabies on special occasions for his young children: for his daughter, a song about a rooster and the chicken; for his son, a song about a Wau-Wau (dog). In a 1933 letter sent directly to his son on his birthday, Fechenbach wrote:

My dear Kurtl,
This time, unfortunately, I cannot be with you on your birthday. But I am thinking a lot about my small chap [kleiner Bursche] who by now has become a big boy. For your birthday, I wish you all the best. Be good, stay healthy and please your mum a lot [Freude machen].162

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161 Fechenbach, Mein Herz schlägt weiter, 23.

In a similar expression of affection, Marum, on his wedding day, May 2, 1933, wrote the following letter:

Beloved,
I have never imagined that I would send you a love letter censored by the [KZ] director… But it cannot harm. The censor might as well read that I love you deeply from my heart. We have been living together now for twenty-four years… Our marriage has some years been hard; we are both stubborn and sensitive. But I could not imagine a life without you… I thank you today for the present of your love. When our love began, I was a wild, naïve [tumb] student, you a romantic girl. Some shedding [Häutung] we had to endure since. But only in these years have we matured and learned to understand what love means. Community [Lebensgemeinschaft], goodness, endurance, and reciprocal help and bonding…and the will always to come back to one another, the will to be one, and the feeling to be one until our hopefully distant death…. For this love, I thank you today on your birthday. I thank you today especially for our three children. I am so dearly fond of them [lieb haben] … I embrace [umfasse] them with the same love as you do…163

In a comparable situation, Julius Einstein wrote from a German prison in August 1941 in a letter to his two children in the United States who were awaiting their mother’s arrival:

My dear dears [Meine lieben Lieben],
I am healthy, thank God, as well. The food is good. It is plentiful and tasty... I hope to soon get released. In the meantime, I ask you not worry about me. Our dearly loved mother, [and you] dear Ruth, you both have given me so much love and goodness in my life that the memory of the happiest time of my life keeps me healthy and content... Your loving [menschenliebender] Father.164

Jewish men could, as these examples indicate, use emotions as a tool to try to ensure a sense of relief within their families and their homes. Sending open expression of affection helped Jewish men crucially in their endeavor to preserve their gender identity as caring, affectionate men, characteristics that had been traditionally praised and linked to domestic masculinity in Jewish religious culture.

163 Marum, Briefe aus dem KZ Kislau, 68. Trans. S. Huebel.
While as “givers,” Jewish men could provide practical and symbolic support, Jewish men also benefitted from the sustained relationships to their families. Most significantly, being in touch with their families could trigger an inspirational, invigorating will to live and to endure the various hardships and camp deprivations. As pointed out, Jewish men, removed from their place of domestic authority, were often concerned about their families’ well-being. Every sign of life from their families, thus, was meaningful to these men as it meant that they could indirectly continue performing the roles of husbands and fathers. Prior to their deportations to camps all over the country, Jewish men were typically held in local police jails, where their wives and children could visit and bring clothing, food and other life essentials. Often, they could also exchange a few words. It was still relatively common for spouses and children to visit their husbands and fathers in jails and even in concentration camps.\(^\text{165}\) Carl Schwabe recalled how grateful he was to receive a sign of life (\emph{Lebenszeichen}) from his family.\(^\text{166}\) Johanna Marum visited her father Ludwig up to three times a day in the Kislau concentration camp, where he would receive precooked meals and always a little note from his wife.\(^\text{167}\) Knowing about their families’ well-being, Jewish men had one less reason to be worried in camp. Hans Reichmann recalled in his memoir how during his imprisonment, he repeatedly read his wife’s letter and how he kept it tied to his rags, next to his handkerchief and a piece of bread. As a comrade of his prudently put it: “We must conserve ourselves for our wives, we must bear up \emph{[durchhalten]} for our families.”\(^\text{168}\)


\(^{166}\) Schwabe, \emph{Memoirs}, 80.

\(^{167}\) Marum, \emph{Briefe aus dem KZ Kislau}, 46.

\(^{168}\) Reichmann, \emph{Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude}, 233. For an interesting exchange of love letters between Ruth Grabowski (b. 1907) and her boyfriend Werner Cohn (1912-1942) who was arrested and imprisoned in 1938 for various delinquencies, see Sammlung Familie Grabowski, JMB, Convolute 224.
Often, however, communicating with the outside world was infrequent or prohibited altogether. Max Behrendt (1910-1942) in his letter to his family moaned that he had not heard from anyone in months and rightly speculated that his family’s letters never reached him. In his letter, he declared how dearly he missed everyone, especially his son.\textsuperscript{169} Even then, however, when communication was disrupted and men did not receive direct emotional support from their families, as Alfred Schwerin remembered, for his daughter’s sake he had to remain strong.\textsuperscript{170} Behrendt had kept a picture of his ten-year-old son, Jack, on his prison table. Werner Tabaschnik, in his report, recounted his suicidal thoughts while imprisoned, but his thoughts of his children and his wife swayed him otherwise.\textsuperscript{171} Jewish men imprisoned in concentration camps benefitted from the emotional relationships they cultivated with their families.

**Getting Out and Getting Over It: Jewish Men after their Release**

Surviving a Nazi concentration camp through familial mental support, however, did not make men’s transition back into normal life following their release a simple step. Instead, Jewish men’s return, recorded in their memoirs as well as by their family members, represented an upsetting and traumatizing ordeal for the entire family. With injured and disfigured bodies and traumatized psyches, Jewish men experienced their post-camp experience as times when their masculinities were out of balance.

Many Jewish men remembered their deep embarrassment upon their release based on their physical re-entry into the public. Either through their dirty clothes and scruffy, disheveled


\textsuperscript{170} Schwerin, Memoirs, 87.

\textsuperscript{171} Tabaschnik, “Königstein,” 105.
appearance because of having been denied sanitary conditions or based on their physical disfigurement such as shaved heads and visible injuries, Jewish men’s return home was an emotionally unsettling event. It was gender-specific as their violated physical appearance was unique to men only and visibly demarcated them from men and women in mainstream society. Siegfried Oppenheimer recalled how at the train station on his way home, people pityingly looked at him and his comrades. Having reached his hometown, he walked side-streets only. “In the clothes [Garderobe] I was wearing, I did not want to be seen by anyone I knew. And I had not washed myself in five weeks.”172 Alfred Schwerin even recalled that he and his fellow inmates had to travel by train in sealed-off wagons with shut windows preventing the public from coming into contact with the ex-inmates who were clearly aware of their special status.173 Having arrived home, it was a “strange feeling that accompanied us on this first walk through the streets. A sense of uncertainty befell us. We imagined that ever passerby had to turn around and look at us.”174

For observers and families, the look of Jewish men returning home was a shock, which in turn likely enhanced Jewish men’s feeling of being ostracized, of belonging to a different group that was defined by the Nazi-defined category of race and gender. Inge Deutschkron (b. 1922) vividly remembered: “How these men looked! Their heads shaved bald. Some had significantly lost weight, others were entirely disfigured from the beatings.”175 When the well-known Jewish journalist Bella Fromm (1890-1972) was able through high-up connections to get an acquaintance out of Buchenwald in 1937, she could not help but note in her diary:

There, I finally saw Dr. Kraft… He was very emaciated, trembled continuously and could hardly rise from his chair. I had to fight to keep the tears back when I saw this poor wreck of a human being.176

172 Oppenheimer, Meine Erlebnisse, 15.
173 Schwerin, Memoirs, 95.
174 Ibid., 96.
175 Inge Deutschkron, Ich trug den gelben Stern, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1979), 54.
176 Fromm, Blood and Banquets, 249.
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With the general public reacting so dishearteningly, for Jewish men’s families it was even more troubling. Carl Schwabe recalled that upon his arrival at home, his maid, opening the front door screamed, his wife was overwhelmed by tears and smiles, and his son said: “Oh Papa, look at you. You look like you are 53.” Schwabe agreed. “I looked indeed quite different.”

177 Hans Kuttner thought of his father upon his return as a bald baby.178 Ernst Haumann (b. 1929), nine years old at the time, remembered his uncle returning with frostbite on his extremities.179 Leon Szalet’s daughter described her impression of seeing her father Leon (1892-1958) after he was released from Sachsenhausen in May 1940:

> What I saw was a human ruin, the wreck of a man with a head which resembled a skull of a dead person covered with skin and a protruding nose. It was difficult to recognize the man in this distorted human body that was my father. If there had not been his eyes, I would not have recognized him.180

After visiting his father in the camp in 1933, the ten-year-old Werner Tabaschnik recalled:

> After a while, the door opened and a man was standing there. I looked at him and said nothing because I did not think it was our father. This man was terribly thin [dürre] und trembling. I felt sorry for him... then I started to cry. My father was standing there, trembling and did not dare to look at us.181

On the other hand, the father, Max Tabaschnik, experienced the family reunion in this way:

> My wife did not recognize me. My child did not recognize me. After the SA man said, “Here he is.” … The boy started crying heavily. The SA man was embarrassed about this and took the boy on his lap. He reassured my wife that I would be transferred to a hospital on the same day.182

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177 Schwabe, Memoirs, 82, 84.
178 Kuttner, “Interview Transcript,” 5.
179 Ernst Haumann, A Family during Troubled Times. The Haumanns and the Weingartners, 1934-1944, LBINY, ME886 MIII12, 12.
As plenty of these memoirs and contemporary sources evince, Jewish men’s status had dramatically changed through their absence and victimization in concentration camps. Jewish men were aware of their changed position in society and at home. They experienced tremendous shame upon their return to the public and, more significantly, at home, where spouses and children might feel disturbed at their returned heads of household, seeing them as some kind of disfigured strangers. While Jewish men had proven themselves able to endure hardship, discrimination and violence by the means of military masculinity within the camps, their re-integration into civilian life was, at first, an emasculating process highlighted by shame and feelings of embarrassment.

Getting back to a normal life proved difficult to many men, though every individual fared differently. Prior to their release, Jewish inmates were explicitly warned not to talk to anyone about their time in the camps and were further obliged to sign declarations that they had not been mistreated in the camps.\(^{183}\) Otherwise, they would get arrested again. Their families, however, wanted their husbands and fathers to talk about the experiences in places that seemed so horrifyingly foreign. Ingeborg Hecht (b. 1921) recalled, “We wanted him to speak.”\(^{184}\) But with or without the Nazi threat to keep silent, most survivors preferred not to talk about their haunting experiences. As Marion Kaplan has asserted, threatened with worse punishment if they told anyone of their suffering in the camps, many Jewish men were too terrified to tell their families.\(^{185}\) As a way of suppressing their psychic traumas, or simply being unable to do otherwise, many never spoke about their time; others took years to talk or write about it, and “shame culture”\(^{186}\) certainly

\(^{183}\) See, for instance, Oppenheimer, *Meine Erlebnisse*, 14.
\(^{184}\) Ingeborg Hecht, *Invisible Walls and To Remember is to Heal: A German Family under the Nuremberg Laws* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1984), 58.
\(^{185}\) Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 123.
\(^{186}\) In shame cultures, Thomas Kühne writes, “the community sets itself up as the highest moral authority. Shame is grounded in the fear of exposure, disgrace and exclusion, with which the community threatens the individual who does not submit to its rules. Shame culture trains one to be inconspicuous, to conform, to participate…” In a German-Jewish context, it was Jewish men who experienced shame in form of their violent exclusion from the
might have contributed to it. For men, talking about their inhumane treatment, their powerlessness and their victimization would not have constructively helped to reestablish their position within their families and society as men of authority. Emil Schorsch remembered:

When we were getting released, an SS officer was standing in front of us who in a toxic voice warned us: “When you are abroad and talk about Germany and your arrest, we will catch you, wherever you are!” These were his approximate words, but the tone of his voice remained in my memory forever. I had not even told my wife about the concentration camp until we got to America.\(^{187}\)

However, men’s feelings of fear and intimidation went deeper and could include additional signs of change. Emil Schorsch recalled his excessive thirst after his release, something his wife never could understand.\(^ {188}\) Sigmund Weltlinger thought he was freezing every night, despite the excessive heat in his bedroom. Hertha Nathorff, a physician from Berlin, recalled in her diary an episode when a friend begged her for help. The friend’s husband, a sixty-year old educated, affluent and well-respected businessman, was having crying and screaming episodes ever since his release from Dachau. Several times, he had tried to jump of a window in front of his wife.

He cannot stand it any longer in the country of murderers and thieves. Hand-wringer, my friend conjured him \([\text{beschwören}]\) to be silent... I know they had beaten and maltreated him in the KZ. Others have told me. He too returned home sick and his life destroyed. He too is a victim of the Third Reich.\(^ {189}\)

Jewish men’s emasculation could be communicated in other indirect ways. Many were fearful of renewed arrest. Others feared new violence on the street and further beatings. Others yet, such as Sigmund Weltlinger, were haunted by terrible nightmares.\(^ {190}\) Alfred Schwerin, after being

\(^{188}\) Ibid., p. 12. Schorsch was imprisoned in Buchenwald, near Weimar. The camp was in a forested, elevated location, cut off from any direct water supplies. Many former camp survivors of Buchenwald recalled the enduring thirst prisoners had to suffer due to highly limited and inadequate supplies of drinking water.
released from Dachau, remembered how tense and nervous Jewish life had become in Germany. When an unsuccessful assassination attempt was made on Hitler in September 1939, he contemplated his next move together with his female co-workers:

I was standing at the door, thinking what to do. Under no circumstances staying here!... because last year too, the mob invaded this place, breaking everything. They probably would come here first again. “Should I go home and warn my father and my two brothers so that they can go hide with their Christian friends?” Miss Horendrekaler [sic?] asked me almost crying. “That should be the best,” I answered. “I am also going to ride my bike to Mannheim to warn my husband,” said Mrs. Herz, running frantically down the stairs.191

As this passage illustrates, men’s distinct predicament continued after the Kristallnacht pogroms of 1938. German Jews based their behaviors on men’s previous experience of arrest. Jewish women again feared for their male relatives’ safety and once again hiding was chosen as the best means to circumvent another storm of arrests. As many Jewish men had already experienced what it meant to be imprisoned in a concentration camp, the ensuing fear and horrifying vision of again undergoing such an experience was a constant burden in Jewish men’s lives in the late 1930s, a gender-idiosyncratic reality. When Walter Besser’s brother was released from Dachau in 1936, after three years of confinement, including brutal mistreatment, temporary solitary arrest (Einzelhaft) and punitive arrest in darkness (Dunkelhaft), Walter (b. 1911) remembered how frightened his brother acted afterward:

He spoke very little about Dachau... When we went out on the street, he constantly looked behind himself, and when he entered a train, he always had to make sure that he was not being followed [verfolgt wurde].192

Moritz Mandelkern described his adolescent son’s return from Sachsenhausen in August 1940 as a blessed day for him and his wife.

191 Schwerin, Memoirs, 162. Trans. S. Huebel.
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But sometimes, it was strange. When he saw a soldier, on the way to the synagogue, he would jump to attention… He was so different. He might have been away five years instead of nine months, …. Often when he talked the two of us just looked at him and wondered if this was our child. Often, he was silent, not at all like a boy of sixteen. He never spoke about his time in Sachsenhausen.193

Both examples strongly suggest that living in fear of renewed arrests by the Nazis and future violence was a haunting and gender-specific phenomenon in the lives of many Jewish men in the years preceding the Holocaust. Some men’s demeanors had dramatically changed and overtly differed from the masculine ideal of acting as and appearing physically strong and confident at home and in the public.

As the most radical expression of their haunted and violated psyches and their incapability to process and cope with their traumas, some Jewish men could not handle their predicament and resorted to suicide. Oskar Hirschfeld described a seventy-year-old fellow prisoner in Dachau who had lost his eyesight in the camp due to splintered glasses that had penetrated his eyes and shot himself shortly after his release.194 Hans Reichmann summed it up when he wrote:

Some cannot endure the feelings of the regained freedom and break down in their memories of the experiences of Sachsenhausen. Comrade Gassmann, lawyer in Gleiwitz, in a state of mental destruction [seelischer Vernichtung] ended his life.195

All these post-release behaviors show that for some men, an emasculating process commenced and came to full fruition following their release during their painful attempts at reintegration. Through fear, Jewish men acted in ways that stood in stark contrast to what military masculinity simultaneously celebrated in non-Jewish society. While the fearless “Aryan” soldier would soon get his opportunity to prove his physical and mental prowess in Hitler’s war, Jewish

194 Anonymous, “B136,” in Novemberpogrom, 818. See also the witness account “B116” for a list of more suicides. For suicides within concentration camps, see “B152.”
men in German society and within their homes had become powerless men who in addition to their deep economic anxieties about trying to fulfil the breadwinner role also had to deal with their violated bodies and the serious implications that they evidently could no longer perform the protector role, as in their eyes, they were not even able to protect themselves.

**Conclusion:**

In the Third Reich prior to the Holocaust, as this chapter has demonstrated, much of the physical antisemitic violence weighed specifically on Jewish men. This violence was processed in gendered terms by Jewish men, their wives, their children and Jewish society in general. As Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman have rightly pointed out in the context of the Holocaust:

> Many families decided that it was safer for the women to go out in the streets… Thus, family strategies for daily life, from who should wait in line for bread to who should go to the Nazi authorities – were forged in response to the perception and anticipation of how the Germans would treat men and women… There was an initial focus on Jewish men for arrest and incarceration in both Western and Eastern Europe… It was much more likely for men to be beaten, arrested and imprisoned… more likely to be executed.\(^{196}\)

The intended contribution of this chapter was to shift focus away from the years of the Holocaust to demonstrate that Nazi violence in discernable patterns was not different from what Ofer and Weitzman rightly described in the context of occupied wartime Europe. As Alan Steinweis has argued, antisemitic violence in the prewar Third Reich was much more common than is often assumed.\(^{197}\) Starting with Hitler’s takeover in 1933, Jewish men fell victim to a range of attacks in their social environments that were executed by local perpetrators, in their homes, on the street and in enclosed, isolated environments such as concentration camps. Though it is too

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\(^{197}\) Steinweis, *Kristallnacht*, 5.
far-reaching to use Adam Jones’s idiom of gendercide to describe Nazi Germany’s prewar crimes against Jews – and feminist historians have elucidated how women, Jewish and non-Jewish, could also be targeted and violated by a racial regime – in terms of numbers it is clear that men were primarily affected by the most primitive and raw forms of physical violence in the first half of the Third Reich, when moral cultural codes of sparing women and children were still in place. As the first section of this chapter has illustrated, this violence could manifest itself as a corollary to the antisemitic propaganda and imagery of Jewish physicality. Thus, German Jews internalized such propaganda as they witnessed what effects it could have. Men who perceived themselves in their appearance as non-Jewish felt safer; Jewish men who thought they related in their looks to the propaganda imagery were more self-conscious and anxious, depending on the context, about possible assaults against them. Over time, however, with antisemitism increasing in frequency and ferocity, Jewish men, regardless of their looks, adapted their behaviors to circumvent danger. Hide and escape were the two common and distinctly gendered reactions by many men. Unlike the racial defilement discourse, physical attacks against Jewish men did differentiate among other crucial and intersecting categories such as age and class. Especially the latter could play a profound role. Jewish men of significant wealth were more likely to get invaded in their homes, brutalized, extorted for money and thrown into jail if they refused to liquidate their businesses and other assets.

In the second part, I focused on prewar concentration camps, outlining some common forms of camp violence. Jane Caplan has argued that monolithically depicting camps to be gendered male spaces is perilously close to saying that they had no gendered identity at all.198 Agreeing with her argument, I focused my analysis on gender relations by not simply recapturing the violence inflicted on men in the camps. Instead, by returning to the concept of military

198 Caplan, “Gender and the Concentration Camps,” 83.
masculinity, I showed how Jewish men adapted to their environments by carefully observing their tormentors and their displays of aggressive masculinity and how they subsequently adjusted their own demeanor in performative ways. Adhering to military norms, Jewish men were reminded to the 1914-1918 period and soon realized that exhibiting a military-like composure, which they had learned previously in a different setting, could make a difference over life and death.

Furthermore, using military masculinity, Jewish men distinguished themselves from other male prisoners by effectively utilizing a military canon of masculine values and behaviors such as exhibiting (to their perpetrators and other prisoners) discipline, hardiness, steadfastness and obedience. In a highly-militarized, exclusively male context, Jewish men’s adaptation of and resort to military behavior constituted an attempt to preserve their gender identities. Military masculinity was lived in camps, while other men, who were unfamiliar with this configuration of masculinity, often fared far worse.

The implications of being deported, imprisoned and tortured in Nazi concentration camps were far-reaching and transcended coping mechanisms within the camps. Upholding relationships with the outside world was of paramount importance to Jewish men. By trying to sustain their roles as husbands and fathers, Jewish men faced major struggles. Their absence from home and the uncertainties revolving around their families’ well-being was tortuous. Yet, as a coping mechanism and method of survival, many men exhibited their manhood by performing the roles of decision-makers and advice-givers at a distance. Bereft of their provider and protector roles, men found other venues to “give” – typically in the form of written words. Simultaneously, men benefitted significantly from their continued relations to their families. My conclusion, therefore, disagrees with that of Falk Pingel, who argues:

It seems that the men who were in contact with their families or who still had communication with the outside world experienced much greater difficulties in
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adjusting to daily life within the concertation camps. They tried to subdue their feelings and emotions, in the belief that such behavior would weaken their ability to survive the harsh conditions. 199

Instead, major problems of adjustment to daily life occurred after their release from concentration camps, in the form of “shame culture,” when many Jewish men had to deal with disfigured bodies, violated psyches, shattered economic existences and future insecurities from the overwhelming predicament of realizing their and their families’ immediate emigration. What happened to the Jewish men who were unable or unwilling to leave Germany in time will be the focus of my final chapter.

199 Falk Pingel, “Social Life in an Unsocial Environment: The Inmates’ Struggle for Survival,” in Nazi Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories, eds. Nikolaus Wachsmann & Jane Caplan (London: Routledge, 2009), 69. I call Pingel’s argument a “hypothesis” as the author himself acknowledges that “nevertheless, to date we have neither interview nor reports from survivors on this subject, nor seen a methodical approach that might conform such a theory.” To me, it seems that a close look at Jewish men’s memoirs and reports of their prewar internment, when Jewish women were generally not interned, is a suitable approach to study the dynamics of such gender relations.
Chapter 6

Defying Deportation:
‘Underground’ Experiences and Jewish Masculinity ¹

With the beginning of deportations of German Jews in the fall of 1941, approximately 165,000 Jews still remained in Germany. When rumors about the murder of Jews in Eastern Europe began to percolate, an increasing number of German Jews decided to resist their deportation by going into hiding. Approximately 6,000 Jews decided to remain in Nazi Germany illegally by disappearing from the public scene and abandoning their homes. It is estimated that about 1,500 survived, less than a third of the “U-Boote” (submarines), a term used about and by the Jews who lived underground, habitually resurfacing into the public sphere when they needed to change shelter or find food.² This chapter will focus on the experiences of Jewish men living underground in wartime Germany.³

The decision to go underground was a difficult one. First, as most Jews still lacked precise details about places like Auschwitz, many simply could not imagine or refused to believe that a relocation to Poland meant certain death. Some hope remained that their forced migration would mean only forced labor for the German military. Second, for many Jews who suspected their imminent murder in Poland, going underground was still not a viable alternative. Living an

¹ A version of this chapter was presented at the Western Jewish Studies Association Conference at Claremont McKenna College, CA, on March 27, 2017. I am grateful to all participants for their feedback.
³ A study on Jewish escapes from Nazi Germany during the war would be equally interesting, but for the purpose of a gender analysis less suitable as Jewish men and women, often of younger age, resorted to illegal crossing of Germany’s border, typically into Switzerland, and their decisions and experiences did not significantly differ from one another. Furthermore, there is considerably more material to study Jewish underground life, which often lasted for several years, while survival stories by means of escape typically encompass a few days or weeks. For more literature on Jewish escapees from Nazi Germany, see Beate Kosmala, “Robert Eisenstädt’s Flucht aus dem KZ Majdanek: Über Frankfurt am Main in die Schweiz,” in Überleben im Dritten Reich, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: Beck Verlag, 2003), 287-299. For a published primary source account, see Herbert Strauss, In the Eye of the Storm (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999).
“illegal” existence meant sacrificing one’s past lives, one’s home, sense of belonging, social relationships and work. Without work, moreover, “illegal” Jews would also have no access to food ration cards and other foodstuffs. From this perspective, without a place to go and no access to life essentials, the decision to run away seemed highly risky, unpromising and irreversible. Third, the decision to go underground required support by non-Jewish friends who were able and willing to help, either in the form of providing shelter, finding alternative hiding places or by providing food and other life essentials. Finding such “good Germans,” however, was no easy matter for a Jewish population that had been cut off and segregated for years from German social life. Furthermore, going underground with the support of anti-Nazi resisters still required thorough planning and execution of such plans, a time-consuming task. Finding shelters during the war and reaching out to friends or, often, strangers to ask for help was a risky, strenuous process that required much courage, tenacity and time for preparation. Fourth, the fear of getting caught by the Gestapo with anticipated harsh reprisals was a further deterrent. Although by 1942 most Jews had realized that they would face harsh treatment, to say the least, in Eastern Europe, from a psychological perspective, as self-perceived law-abiding citizens, many still feared the repercussions of breaking the law in Germany. Finally, the decision to go underground was also a matter of physical health and age. The majority of German Jews who had remained by 1941/42 in Nazi Germany were relatively old (as the younger ones had mostly emigrated or escaped in prewar times). The chances for an underground survival seemed even more daunting for elderly and physically less mobile Jews. For these reasons, many German Jews decided against going underground.

Though Jewish men and women faced the same harsh realities of living underground, there were discernable and significant differences that made the survival of Jewish men and women dissimilar. As the following discussion will demonstrate, in their attempt to survive Nazi war and
genocide, Jewish men faced distinct challenges as men and as a result developed gendered survival strategies that involved changing their identities and even their physical appearance.

Few historians of the Holocaust have analyzed in detail the gender-specific challenges and risks for Jewish men who tried to survive the Nazis by evading deportation to an extermination camp. In her study of Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe, Nechama Tec interviewed women who had lived in the underground. One interviewee recalled:

We had a friend who looked like a thousand Poles. He had no resemblance to a Jew but he had to move around town because he had to make a living. Once he was just walking the streets and a Pole stopped him with a “come into the courtyard.” The usual happened. The Pole threatened, made our friend pull down his pants and then examined his documents. In the end our friend had to bribe the blackmailer.\(^4\)

The interviewee continued:

Men were more fearful than women and more likely to hide. It was harder to find places for men and if somebody took money for protecting Jews, they took more money for men. People were less suspicious of women. A woman could much more easily find an apartment. She could walk around town and pass more easily. A woman could dye her hair. Dressed up, she looked more like a Polish woman. Men even slightly Jewish looking were more exposed… Men could be more easily identified through circumcision… And so realistically, Jewish men had more to fear than Jewish women.\(^5\)

Besides a few testimonies and references by female survivors pertaining to men’s underground existence, few records have made it into official historiography. Though some scholars of women’s history have significantly augmented historical understanding of the social life of submerged Jews in Nazi Germany and Eastern Europe, German-Jewish men and their perspectives have not been analyzed in terms of their gender-specific experiences, a desideratum that will be filled below.


\(^5\) Ibid., 217.
1. Jewish Men at Risk

Living an illegal life, despite being referred to as an underground existence, in fact often happened in the public. As German Jews had to abandon their homes in order to escape, often unprepared and unexpected, many faced tremendous challenges in finding shelter or a temporary place of refuge. Only the fortunate ones could entirely rely on outside help for food and shelter and thus entirely go into hiding for the duration of the war. For many more, however, finding a place to sleep and obtaining the means to purchase food was such a challenge that it forced them to appear in the open public. Furthermore, from a psychological perspective, as Richard Lutjens has explained, Jews tried to maintain some resemblance of a social life and live normal lives by going to movie theatres or restaurants; it was a necessity to fight the isolating monotony of their hiding places.\(^6\)

On May 21, 1943, months after the last Jews in Berlin had been officially deported,\(^7\) the police caught Arthur Isaac in a restaurant. Raids in restaurants were especially common as the police knew that fugitives were in desperate need of food and often still possessed some money or other valuables. Furthermore, during the war, gastronomical businesses were obliged to provide a basic free meal, the Stammessen, typically a watery soup, that did not require food ration cards. Though Jewish women were of course also enticed to consume these free meals, men were more likely to get arrested. This was because not only the Gestapo was hunting for fugitive Jews, men and women, in their routine checks of civilians, but in addition the military police which were looking for deserters from military service. Arthur Isaac, who was arrested in such a restaurant,


\(^7\) Berlin was the last city with a significant number of Jews in Germany. In the infamous Fabriaktion, the last Berlin Jews, about 10,000 of them who had been performing forced labor, were directly arrested at work and sent to Auschwitz. After the Fabriaktion, Germany was declared judenfrei (free of Jews).
only survived because he could escape from the train heading to Auschwitz. Back in Berlin, he found refuge with one of his former girlfriends, never again leaving the apartment until the war’s end.8

Making an appearance in public was always risky, especially in familiar areas where people recognized Jews. Siegfried Priester (b. 1904) was recognized by his neighborhood baker in September 1943 in Berlin and arrested by the police. He too was lucky to escape from a cattle wagon heading to Auschwitz.9 To avoid arrest, Jews had to be on the move. Gerd Philipsohn (b. 1922) remembered that he spent most his time on the streets or in the streetcar (S-Bahn), while at night he was freezing in his sleep in some ruins. Hermann Pineas spent his time in parks, reading newspapers,10 and David Fränkel (b. 1927) slept in parks.11 Isaak Behar spent his nights entirely in Berlin’s heated streetcars, travelling from one end to the next.12 While exposing themselves to public scrutiny was not a particularly gendered risk, it was Jewish women more than men who could find temporary or permanent shelter while men ran a greater risk of getting caught. Accommodating a man was much riskier for gentile helpers as it could generate awkward questions from nosy neighbors. As a result, Jewish men spending their days in the open public were persistently exposed to the risk of being apprehended by the Gestapo, military police and Jewish informers.

Jewish men’s dangerous appearances in public were further complicated if they resembled in any way the antisemitic propaganda that for years had depicted Jewish men in certain stereotypical ways. As I have shown, being recognized on the street as a Jew could lead directly

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11 Hermann Pineas, Memoir, LBINY ME502 MM4 MM61, 35.
6. Jewish Men in the Underground

to violence in the 1930s and accusations of racial defilement (Chapter 2 & 5). The discourse of Jewish physicality and the associated risk lingered into the war years after most German Jews had been deported. Anna Priester recalled that following her and her husband’s surrender of their Berlin apartment in January 1943, the couple first moved around aimlessly throughout the city until one day a pedestrian denounced her husband due to his allegedly Jewish appearance. Even though the couple was able to get out of this perilous situation as they were in possession of false identity papers purchased on the black market, both realized that complete hiding was necessary if they wanted to survive the Third Reich.\(^\text{13}\) Appearing in public was for Heinz Priester, and many others who had been fortunate enough not to get caught, too risky an endeavor. For the great majority, however, maleness itself was reason enough to raise suspicion.

Even the pervasive discourse of physical Jewishness that Germans and German-Jews had internalized for years could become a problem in the life-threatening moment of a bombardment from the air. Heinz Rosenbaum (b. 1906), who together with his wife and daughter had gone underground in December 1942, recounted that in the air shelters “it was especially bad as I was tall and blonde and women often wondered why I was not in the war.”\(^\text{14}\) Thus, while an alleged Jewish look could bring one into jeopardy as someone living in the underground, the opposite could also be problematic as Germans assumed that a middle-aged Aryan-looking man would be stationed at the front or at least wear a uniform.

**a) The Role of the Military**

In contemporary sources and memoirs written after the war, Jewish survivors seem to agree about the specific challenges that Jewish men going underground faced. Rudolph Frauenfeld

\(^\text{13}\) Anna Priester, “Antrag auf Entschädigung wegen Schaden an Körper und Gesundheit,” GDW Berlin.

asserted in an article published in the magazine *Der Weg: Zeitschrift für Fragen des Judentum* shortly after the war, in March 1946, that men living underground were especially threatened as they were routinely asked for military papers.\textsuperscript{15} Sigmund Weltlinger (1886-1974) in an account written after 1945, recalled that for military-aged men it was very risky: “Women had it much easier as they were taken in as housemaids.”\textsuperscript{16} Zvi Aviram goes into more detail in his recent memoir:

> For women and girls, everything was a bit easier. Men and young lads had it disproportionately [ungleich] harder. We were more suspect from the beginning because we were of military-age [wehrfähigem Alter] Whoever did not possess military papers or something similar, was in constant danger… to get arrested. Even more remarkable that I could always evade the checks. Once in a theatre, I was lucky as during an ID check, an air raid warning happened. Another time, I could jump off a train in the last minute. But I always had to be cautious [auf der Hut sein].

Finally, the young Konrad Latter remembered the trouble he had finding shelter for himself and his parents, a situation that was complicated by the fact that he and his father were of military age. Though there was a great demand for male workers, and thus they should have easily found work and a place to stay, men, as Latte explained, immediately raised suspicion as they were supposed to be stationed at the front or have Wehrmacht exemption papers.\textsuperscript{18}

Strikingly, like German Jews’ evaluation of the 1930s as a time when Jewish men were categorically considered to be more prone to physical assault and violence, during the war the perception that Jewish men were at higher risk of getting apprehended was shared by both Jewish men and women. Hertha Pineas recalled that for every man it was much harder to find a place of


\textsuperscript{18} Konrad Latte. *Und wenn wir nur eine Stunde gewinnen…. Wie ein jüdischer Musiker die Nazi-Jahre überlebte*, ed. Peter Schneider (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2001), 81.
refuge because potential helpers feared that these men might raise suspicion and get asked to show their military papers. In a similar vein, Valerie Wolffenstein noted that “it was particularly difficult for the men to find a hiding place. They were always suspect if they were of military age and not in uniform. They were checked more closely than women.” Jewish women, thus, shared an awareness of men’s conspicuous state, witnessing their marginalization even when German Jews were going underground, trying to survive.

b) The Danger of War and Work

While contemporaries, both men and women, seem to have been in an agreement that it was more of a challenge for Jewish men to hide and they were more likely to get caught, there was a specific range of dangers that Jewish men faced and experienced. One related to the life-threatening situations of the war; another to the predicament of making a living, even as an outlaw.

With the increase in Allied air raids starting in 1942, residents of German cities sought shelter in nearby air raid shelters, often for many hours. While these shelters provided protection for many people, they were not available for illegal Jews. In many memoirs, Jewish men recalled their traumatic fears and the danger of getting caught in an air raid shelter that they used to find refuge in. As civilians congregated in such shelters, men had to often provide identification to the police or military police. This was a major difference in Jewish gender experience and a challenge Jewish women did not face. Franz Rogasinski recalled that “in the public air raid shelters, one constantly was in great danger [in Gefahr schweben] to get seized. I did not possess any ID.”

19 Hertha Pineas, Memoir, LBINY ME 502 MM4 MM61, Folder 3, p. 7.
Ludwig Katz (b. 1895) had it recorded in October 1945 that during the air attacks, he could not go to the shelter and instead had to hide in a closet.\(^{22}\)

This gendered form of danger also had an impact on Jewish women. Erna Segal, who lived illegally separated from her husband – a common strategy of couples to reduce the risk of both husband and wife getting caught together – recalled her unbearable anxiety every time there was an air raid in Berlin and her husband, unlike his wife, had to remain in the apartment of friends who were hiding him.\(^{23}\) But as Segal recalled in her 1954 memoir:

> This was our luck. We [she and her child] just made it, arrived breathless at the bunker. After an all-clear [Entwarnung], loudspeakers announced that all men had to show their I.D. The women could leave and the men were checked.\(^{24}\)

Alfred Böhm recorded in 1960:

> One day, after an alarm ended, a military check [Wehrmachtskontrolle] took place. The women were separated from the men and they could leave the air raid shelter. Together with the women, I left the bunker without any women denouncing me. Later, when there was an alarm, I stayed outdoors [im Freien aufgehalten] not to expose myself to another such check.\(^{25}\)

Whereas avoiding air raid shelters during attacks on Berlin was a sensible yet dangerous decision to make for men, their forced presence in public was enhanced by the economic need to provide for themselves and their families. For many Jews who were not able to fully rely on gentile helpers, economic survival was, as I have shown in Chapter 3, an existential dilemma with gendered connotations. As in peacetime, men during the war were expected or expected themselves to pull all possible strings to ensure their families’ subsistence. Yet, gender conventions get broken and temporarily reduced under abnormal conditions such as war.\(^{26}\) In the context of German Jews


\(^{23}\) Erna Segal, You Shall Never Forget, LBINY, ME594 MM69, 240.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 243.


\(^{26}\) The interruption and reversal of gender roles during times of crisis could be seen, for instance, by the increased number of women working in typically male manufacturing jobs and armaments industries or in cultural terms, in the
living underground, Jewish women and children\textsuperscript{27} took on central and proactive roles in finding work, shelter and food for their families, partially enabled due to their presence in public being less conspicuous. However, for Jewish male individuals, the importance of work to generate a sustainable income was no less significant. Moreover, finding work was less risky for Jewish women as it was typically contained to the private sphere in such capacities as kitchen helpers, servants or cleaners. Men on the other hand found their illegal work outside their living quarters. This not only made finding a shelter more challenging, as Germans could be more easily persuaded to take a woman into their house, but it also made men working in the public sphere more visible.

Werner Rewald (b. 1907), who with his wife Ilse went underground on January 11, 1943, recalled in his October 1945 application for restitution that because of his limited means he was dependent on finding a job and made a living as a coal-carrier (\textit{Kohleträger}).\textsuperscript{28} Friedrich Rhonheimer (b. 1889) from Merchingen in Baden fled to Berlin in 1940 when Baden Jews were the first to be deported (to France). Arrested on the street in September 1941 in Berlin, he was able to escape from a transport east. Afterward, “I was forced to work illegally to simply exist \textit{[gezwungen schwarz zu arbeiten um überhaupt existieren zu können]}. I performed the hardest kind of work without a sufficient diet.”\textsuperscript{29} The boxer Salem Schott (1914-2000) who was able to escape from Auschwitz, returned to Berlin where he worked for his friends in a manufacturing role.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27} Often, children had to help their fathers. Hans Winterfeldt recalled that he had to assist his father doing illegal business on the black market, buying and trading items. Sometimes, he had to help carry the items. Werner Foss (b. 1928), living illegally with his parents in Berlin, also supported the family income. Both worked as coal loaders. Hans Winterfeldt, “Oral Interview,” USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive; Werner Foss, “Interview 2005, Transcript” \textit{Sammlung Familie Foss}, JMB, Folder 3, Inv. Nr. 2014/151/52.

\textsuperscript{28} Werner Rewald, “Antrag auf Entschädigung wegen Schaden an Körper und Gesundheit,” GDW Berlin.

\textsuperscript{29} Friedrich Rhonheimer, “Antrag auf Entschädigung wegen Schaden an Körper und Gesundheit,” GDW Berlin.

For fathers who felt the pressure to provide for their children and wives (who often also worked), existential concerns and finding work were especially pressing. Rosenbaum remembered in his report:

How I mastered to protect and provide for my wife and the baby, I cannot describe in a short report. I worked in a flower shop in the Lindenstraße as a delivery person; then I worked as a waiter in a summer restaurant... Following a denunciation, we escaped again to Neuenhagen. There, we lived in an arbor [Laube]. I worked making repairs and manufactured new things [Neuanfertigungen].

The Rosenbaums had to escape once more and also changed their surname to Baum. Remarkably, unlike others, the family stayed together even though this was considered riskier. For his wife and his baby, it would have likely been easier to find a home where the mother could have worked as a maid and would have been able to feed herself and the baby. However, Heinz Rosenbaum, in a patriarchal tone and with a degree of defiant stubbornness and pride, recalled that he protected and provided for the family by exhibiting an enormous degree of flexibility and adaptability, performing simple jobs in the neighborhood which exposed him to denunciations. As a man, he saw it as his obligation to perform the breadwinner and protector roles. Hermann Kranz (b. 1896) also used dramatic language: “It was a time to go down with wife and child.” “It was a very hard time for us. I worked illegally [schwarz gearbeitet] as a tailor.” After switching their hiding places a few times, Kranz accepted a job as a logger [Holzfäller]. “That’s how I struggled through it [mich durchgekämpft].”

Ludwig Collm, in his written report of May 1945, recalled that he saved his family as he was able to find a shelter and through his work giving five singing lessons a day made a quite profitable income:

And most importantly: My wife could again take care of me and cook for the both of us. We were happy that we no longer had to meet in local restaurants to have a

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31 Rosenbaum, “Antrag auf Entschädigung.”
chat and that the unloving \[lieblosen\] meals had an end that had always left you still hungry and afraid of a Gestapo checkup.\(^{33}\)

While for Jewish men work was important to keep themselves and their families alive economically, it was not always possible. In some instances, helpful gentiles were less reluctant to accept women into a household where they and their children could live and work. For men, on the other hand, even if they wanted to work, alternatives were scarce. The Blumenthals, husband and wife, first tried to manage in Berlin, sleeping in bunkers and even the zoo. When this became too unbearable, the couple went into the countryside, hoping to find accommodation with some farmers in return for work. Pretending to be bombed-out victims from the city, the couple was initially welcomed and invited to live-for-work on a farm. After a while, however, the local population became suspicious about the husband, Georg (b. 1888), who therefore had to return to Berlin to find alternative refuge. But Anna (b. 1897) stayed on the farm, working and providing for her absent husband who was primitively housed in a garden arbor in the outskirts of Berlin.\(^{34}\)

In cases such as these, the women of the family took over the breadwinner role, sustaining their families and husbands. Yet, even then, Jewish men’s distinct situation of being at risk and their willingness to work in spite of such dangers, is striking.

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Fritz Neuland also did not deem it appropriate to hide in the countryside. Yet, he took his daughter Charlotte (b. 1932) outside of Munich to a small farming community, Gunzenhausen, where she stayed with a family for three years. Charlotte would become the first female president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany and vice-president of the World Jewish Congress. See Juliane Wetzel, “Karriere nach der Rettung: Charlotte Knobloch’s Weg zur Vizepräsidentin der Juden in Deutschland,” in \textit{Überleben im Dritten Reich}, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: Beck Verlag, 2003).
2. Survival Strategies by Jewish Men

German-Jewish men faced a distinct risk of their illegal existence being uncovered. To minimize their danger, the Jewish male *U-Boote* responded in distinct gendered terms. In the following section, three survival strategies will be dissected and analyzed: Jewish men using gentile women for protection; altering their appearances to look less Jewish or even less male; and, finally, obtaining false military identification papers.

a) Gentile Women

The few thousand German Jews who tried to escape the murderous reach of the Nazis were dependent on some place that provided shelter, especially at night. Whereas some had organized their hiding places prior to their escape, others managed to flee from the Gestapo in a rather impromptu fashion, suddenly facing a street life existence. Samson Schönhaus (1922-2015) recalled that he stayed only one night at any place of hiding, for safety reasons. Others who could trust in strangers stayed longer, but they too were dependent on finding safe places.

Trying to find shelter was not an experience that differentiated Jewish men from women. What was gender-specific, however, was the quantitative lack of men in Germany during the war. As most middle-aged men were needed at the front, social life for German women during the war took place without husbands and boyfriends. This gender asymmetry was a strategic disadvantage for Jewish men as they were more conspicuous on the street, but simultaneously also an advantage for some of them as they could relatively easily find a German girlfriend who would hide and take care of them, especially if they were of a marrying age. Though Jewish women, as argued above, found it less challenging to find shelter in a German household with families where they could

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work as maids, for single, “lonely” German women, it was the opposite. Jewish men’s chances of survival, thus, were not always or necessarily inferior to that of women’s. Yet, Jewish men’s and women’s adaptation to their underground lives and the good fortune to find a protector were grounded in gender conventions, gender practices and gender needs.

Egon Berliner (b. 1893) recalled that although he was supposed to be deported on January 25, 1942, thanks to his gentile girlfriend who was subletting an apartment and was willing to hide him there he survived the war. Berliner subsisted on his girlfriend’s food ration cards.\(^{36}\) Isaak Behar (1923-2011) also evaded deportation. Having lost his parents, Behar spent his days in 1942 reading newspapers in cafés and scanning bombed-out houses for sleeping quarters. His food intake consisted of the free-of-charge meals that were disbursed in restaurants. While food was not the most pressing concern, his conspicuous presence in the public was.

The days passed and I could not help noticing that I was starting to look shabby [\textit{unansehnlich}], life-threateningly conspicuous. My already slightly dark-skinned face failed me for passing as Aryan. And now the black, greasy curls hanging down my forehead, as my last visit to a barber had been quite some time ago.\(^{37}\)

Behar, of course, contemplated using public bathrooms such as at train stations to shave and take care of his hygienic needs but feared the police and spies who frequented such places. This lasted for a few weeks. Then, one day, he was mesmerized by a saleswoman, whom he fell in love with.

You are crazy! You see this woman through the eyes of a totally normal, young man, but you are a Jew. A Jew in hiding… but in this moment, I was suddenly [\textit{auf einmal}] a totally normal young man. I took my heart into my hands and asked the brunette dream [\textit{Traum}] if she wanted to have a cup of coffee with me one day. Her spontaneous response: “Yes, very much so.”\(^{38}\)

Nervous for his date, Behar, who called himself Fritz Müller, had to forge a believable story. “My answer to the question that men were commonly asked back then ‘Why I was not at the front [\textit{nicht...}]

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 136.
6. Jewish Men in the Underground

*im Felde sei*’ was that I was stationed at home.” After a few more dates, Behar moved into his new girlfriend’s place, where he was finally safe and well taken care of.

At Betty’s I had it splendidly [*ging es mir prächtig*]. Not only did I have a protecting ceiling over my head [*Schutzdach*], but a beautiful woman as well. I even wore custom-made suits. I enjoyed the luxury and Betty had her fun in dressing me up nicely.\(^{39}\)

Behar’s story, written in a highly ironic tone, almost reads like an amusing love story. Yet, Behar’s survival in Berlin was one of extraordinary luck. Having lost his parents, the young Behar was completely helpless and, due to his physical appearance, according to his perception, perilously exposed to a police interrogation. Behar’s surreptitious survival depended on the gendered circumstance that he was one of the few young men who were (illegally) part of the home front that mostly consisted of women, such as Betty, who was thirteen years older and formerly married to a Wehrmacht officer. To the very end of the war, when the Red Army had already reached the outskirts of Berlin, Behar was dependent on Betty (who in the meantime had found out about Behar’s Jewish identity). As this case demonstrates, Jewish men and women were dependent on someone who reached out a helping hand, and in an urban desert like Berlin, devoid of men, finding a boyfriend was not only an understandable motivation for German single women, but also a life-saving circumstance that could ensure Jewish men’s survival.

A less romantic but even more paradoxical story is that of Lothar (Larry) Orbach. Born in 1924, the young Orbach had to cope with the death of his father who was interned and murdered in Sachsenhausen in 1940. When his and his mother’s deportation seemed imminent in 1942, both decided to go underground, finding shelter with some loose acquaintances. The hiders’ condition for Lothar, however, was to be away during the day. Walking the streets of Berlin, Lothar ended up in a billiard hall where he met another “illegal” Jew, Anton, who introduced him to a world of

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 143.
leisure consisting of going out to bars, playing pool and meeting German girls. As Anton put it, “The city is full of lonely, truly lonely women who no one takes care of... I eat well, I sleep with a nice woman and earn my money with billiards.”

It did not take long for Anton to invite Larry to his girlfriend’s place, where Anton was conveniently living. Anton’s girlfriend’s female roommate, Trudi, was all for meeting men in men-deprived Germany, though she was married to a soldier who had been in Poland for over a year and who was regularly sending luxurious goods and food packages to her. Larry recalled, “She was good-looking... I looked like an Aryan – well, almost.” Putting up a façade of lies to protect himself, Larry pretended he was a student at the polytechnic university for war-important research. As it was for Anton, it was a win-win situation. Trudi was reluctant to be seen with Larry in public as neighbors would surely start slandering her as an unfaithful, promiscuous German woman who was married to a German soldier, so she preferred to invite Larry over to her place and eventually even asked him to move in, providing him with a set of keys. “Perfect! It was exactly what could save the life of a Jewish boy [Judenzunge].”

Larry recalled his time with Trudi, enjoying the calm days that they spent together reading, in a romantic way. “She was extremely caring and I was her dear whom she insulated [abschirmen] from the outer world.” Anton and Larry indulged in their new lives as “students” who left in the morning to go to school (which were in reality poker halls) while upon their return they would get spoiled by their girlfriends. The historical significance of this story is that these two Jewish men lived a surprisingly normal life with embedded gender conventions and practices that transcended

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41 Ibid., 112.
42 Ibid., 118.
43 Ibid., 118.
questions of race and religion. Both men exposed themselves to great risks during the day, in Berlin’s *S-Bahn* for instance, while commuting to the pool halls or their next poker tournament; yet what compensated for the risk was the feeling of having a home and caring significant other. In terms of material, emotional and sexual standards, Anton and Larry lived the lives of normal men in abnormal times when German Jews were persecuted and murdered. What saved their lives for the time being was their gendered attractiveness (physical and behavioral) to non-Jewish German women in a male-deserted social landscape.

The strange situation did not last. When Trudi’s husband eventually returned, both men had to move out. What makes Larry’s story more significant and representative, however, is that his luck with the women seems to have been recurring. As his mother was still hiding in the German family’s home, the daughter of the hosts also seemed to have developed an interest in Larry. During one date, she sighed:

Oh, Gerhard [Larry’s fake name]. You know how it is. At work, there are only women. Our boss is almost seventy years. This stupid war has stolen us all our boys, the good ones and the bad ones. I have no idea where to find my great love. Perhaps it is you?  

As Larry was not able to stay with his mother, he and Anton found themselves on the street again, but soon met their next girlfriends in a dance hall. Once, both men stayed in a suburban villa for a few weeks, living with two sisters. The owner, a Nazi bigwig, was on vacation with his wife and their two daughters were housesitting. Again, it seemed utopian. “We constantly had to remind ourselves that these two good-hearted sisters could send us to our deaths.” “In the evenings, we transformed into the most charming, courteous Aryan men these two Nazi princesses could have wished for.”  

Yet as before, these temporary relationships were unstable and dangerous. As the

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44 Ibid., 124.
45 Ibid., 149.
girls were starting to make plans to introduce them to their parents, the boys prepared for their silent departure, but not before pilfering some household jewelry and other items. To be better prepared for meager times, every day in the villa “we tried our best to eat as much fatty meat [Speck] as possible.”

Orbach’s stories of relationships with women continue in his memoir. Though his life took a turn for the worse and he lived under primitive conditions for long stretches of time, through his illegal work as a coal loader he continued getting into touch with more German women. What makes Orbach’s story so Hollywood-like is the radical mixture of sex, drugs and amusements that he and his friend could indulge in while confronting the incessant risk of getting killed or deported to a killing center.

As the examples of Berliner, Behar and Orbach indicate, for few – likely very few – Jewish men, circumventing the danger of getting caught in public was made possible by the fortuitous and fortunate circumstance of meeting German women who were longing for male companions. Even these men, however, could not entirely abdicate from re-entering the dangerous public sphere such as when they had to pretend to go to work. What these gigolos shared with other Jewish men who were not so lucky was their self-perceived conspicuousness on the street. To minimize the hazard of standing out and getting noticed in a male-deprived society, Jewish men needed alternative solutions. Some resorted to changing their physical appearance.

b) In Disguise

Jakob Herper (b. 1887) thought it best to grow a beard during his illegal underground existence as he predicted the Gestapo would be on the lookout for him and have a picture of him.47

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46 Ibid., 149.
Josef Scherek also hoped to masquerade himself by wearing glasses and growing a mustache.\textsuperscript{48} Zvi Aviram (born as Heinz Abrahamsohn in 1927) also wore glasses and furthermore dyed his hair blonde.\textsuperscript{49} Hubert Salzmann, after forging a suicide note hoping the Gestapo would believe in his premature death and not further look for him, even decided to convert his appearance into a woman’s. “I had the idea to dress like a woman to circumvent the danger of getting recognized and apprehended.”\textsuperscript{50} Salzmann used his tactic of physical metamorphosis at times of air raid alarms when he sought protection in shelters. As one witness later recalled: “Due to the frequent ID checks of all men in the public bunkers, I have repeatedly seen Herr Salzmann disguised in women’s clothes.”\textsuperscript{51}

Finally, Eugen Hermann-Friede (b. 1926) recalled an episode in a train:

I have not been outside in months without a disguise. It is a strange feeling to walk along the street… I look no one in the eyes… In the train, most men are wearing a uniform, Wehrmacht, Labor Service… some young men of my age have the blue outfits of flag-supporters. I am in a cold sweat [\textit{Blut und Wasser schwitzen}], hoping there will be no ID check.\textsuperscript{52}

Friede describes previous disguises, similar to Salzmann’s, which he adopted as part of his strategy of altering his physical appearance to minimize the risk of being detected in public. Like Salzmann, Friede changed his appearance hoping to deceive.

The weeks pass in relative insouciance. When it is dark and dry outside, both of us, Ruth [the daughter of the family that was hiding him] and I go to catch some fresh air. I change my clothes beforehand, clothes from her, or if they are too tight, from

\textsuperscript{48} Josef Scherek, “\textit{Antrag auf Entschädigung wegen Schaden an Körper und Gesundheit},” GDW Berlin.
\textsuperscript{49} Aviram, \textit{Mit dem Mut der Verzweiflung}, 114.
\textsuperscript{50} Hubert Salzmann, “\textit{Antrag auf Entschädigung wegen Schaden an Körper und Gesundheit},” GDW Berlin. In Salzmann’s file, witnesses further testify that the applicants for restitution indeed occasionally dressed up as a woman.
\textsuperscript{51} Anonymous, “\textit{Zeugenaussage - Antrag auf Entschädigung wegen Schaden an Körper und Gesundheit},” File Hubert Salzmann, GDW Berlin.
her mother. A girl stands out [aufallen] less than a young man of my age without a uniform.\textsuperscript{53}

The examples presented above allude to an alternative coping mechanism, opposite from seeking the attraction of gentile women. Whereas Orbach had turned his jeopardized gender upside down and enjoyed his masculine monopoly of dating German women, other men thought trying to hide their sexual identity, their maleness, was more appropriate. As men were more thoroughly scrutinized and subject to possible police interrogations, men like Aviram and Friede responded by altogether ceasing to be male in physical appearance and thus jettisoned their public masculine identities.

However, both coping mechanisms, one of saliently exhibiting and indulging in one’s sexual masculinity and the other of trying to conceal one’s masculinity, need to be located on the margins. Most Jewish men did not dare to go out, enjoy life in dance clubs and meet girls in bars. Many also did not even have the means to camouflage themselves as women, or did not have the physical constitutions to do so. Most common and thus representative was the procurement of falsified or forged identity papers that made Jewish men (unlike Jewish women) appear as “Aryan” soldiers.

c) Forging Documents and Military Masculinity

Bryan Mark Rigg has demonstrated that at least 6,000 Jews and tens of thousands of Jews of mixed ancestry (Halbjuden) served in the Wehrmacht at some point. This was due to the fact that at first half-Jews were conscripted and even used in the war against Poland and France. Only in 1940/1941 were many dismissed. Others, however, had been able to conceal their true identities either by lying about their Jewishness or by having commanders, in some rare cases even Hitler

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 36.
himself ignore the person’s concerned “race.”54 Salomon Perel (b. 1925) was inadvertently enlisted in the Wehrmacht and participated in battles on the eastern front until, due to his young age, he was sent back to Germany to spend the remainder of the war in an elite Hitler Youth Academy in Braunschweig.55 Karl-Heinz Löwy (b. 1920) was even enlisted in the SS.56 No one ever discovered their Jewishness. In these cases, the military was a safe haven. For most of the Jews who decided to go underground sometime after 1941, clandestinely creeping into the army was no option. Acquiring fake military papers, however, was.

Though both Jewish men and women obtained fake IDs as a common tactic of survival, there are gendered nuances to consider. First, as women were less prone to be checked for ID,57 it was a less pressing issue for women to acquire false papers. Second, in order to work in public, Jewish men had a greater need to obtain false papers. Third, while for Jewish women a false ID that declared them as German might have sufficed, Jewish men’s situation was more fraught as they were required, in addition to getting hold of false IDs, to come up with a believable pretense for not being at the front. Jewish men’s IDs, therefore, had to be forged and military in nature.

54 See Bryan Mark Rigg, Hitler’s Jewish Soldiers: The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002); Bryan Mark Rigg, Lives of Hitler’s Jewish Soldiers: Untold Tales of Men of Jewish Descent who fought for the Third Reich (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009). Rigg estimates that 60,000 half Jews and 90,000 quarter Jews served in the Wehrmacht, including even one Field Marshall. Full Jews who served did so with false documents and their commanders usually believed them to be Aryans.

55 Sally Perel, Ich war Hitlerjunge Salomon, 10th ed. (Munich, Heyne Verlag, 1992).

56 Rigg, Lives of Hitler’s Jewish Soldiers, 62.

57 In my research, I have come across very few cases of Jewish men getting identified by their circumcision. Ernst Rolf Kahn, born 1929, remembered that during his childhood, he was stopped by the S.A. and forced to show his penis. Yet, even if there are relatively few records such as Kahn’s, circumcision as a bodily marker was an issue that some Jewish men feared. Larry Orbach, for instance, was nervous to have sexual encounters with his girlfriends due to his Jewish physical marker. Salomon Perel, who was hiding his true identity as a Hitler Youth boy in an elitist Hitler Youth Academy in Braunschweig, fearing to get seen in the shower rooms even tried to elongate his foreskin, an unsuccessful endeavor that resulted in major pain. Karl-Heinz Löwy during his military medical exam was also extremely nervous about this. Often these men used medical reasons as a pretense, pretending that in their childhood due to infections and other reasons, their doctors had recommended circumcision. On the other hand, Werner Foss (b. 1928) remembered that when the Red Army occupied Berlin, to prove to the Soviet soldiers that he was not a Nazi, he pulled down his pants, making it known that the was Jewish. See Ernst Rolf Kahn, “Bericht,” GDW Berlin; Orbach, Soaring Underground, 122; Perel, Ich war Hitlerjunge Salomon, 69; Rigg, Live’s of Hitler’s Jewish Soldiers, 63. Werner Foss, “Interview Transcript, 2005” Sammlung Familie Foss, JMB, Folder 3, Inv. Nr. 2014/151/52.
Egon Joseph obtained his military papers through the mother of a former friend who had recently died in the war. Equipped with real military papers (and probably changed photos), Egon Joseph had become Peter Matheus and was thus able to withstand any street patrol and examination. With the aid of a gentile friend, Konrad Friedländer was able to purchase a military ID for 6,000 marks, a substantial sum, in January 1943. It was military service card (Dienstausweis) Nr. 9841 with a picture and issued for Rudolf Kopp, a good friend of his who voluntarily offered his name. It was an ingenious plan as the false ID did not contain a made-up name or that of a deceased soldier. Had the Gestapo or police followed up on Friedländer during one of their frequent controls and called the appropriate office, the likely answer would have been that there was indeed a Rudolf Kopp. Zvi Aviram also obtained military papers on the black market from a professional forger who worked for the Luftwaffe. The names the forger used were real and could be confirmed if the authorities made inquiries. “How precious such a piece of paper could be!”

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59 Kurt Friedländer, “Antrag auf Entschädigung wegen Schaden an Körper und Gesundheit,” GDW Berlin
60 Aviram, Mit dem Mut der Verzweiflung, 136.
Fig. 29. Konrad Friedländer’s military papers issued in his friend’s name, Rudolf Kopp

Obtaining military papers was still a risky endeavor and did not guarantee success. Heinz Jacobius, for instance, was arrested with a false OKW (Wehrmacht) passport, interrogated and maltreated.61 Moreover, equally important for Jewish men as possessing some paper that believably concealed their Jewishness (Jewish ID cards used a large “J” letter) was Jewish men’s behavior during the checkups. Suspicious, insecure behavior could result in further questions and interrogation at the police station. Karl Brummer (b. 1914) remembered:

It was getting more difficult because young men were constantly stopped on the street by military police. Then my friend Karlchen came to my help… Karlchen was one of my [non-Jewish] friends who hated the war and did everything to boycott it… He was able to secure a desk job position… He stole Wehrmacht stamps and a bunch of preprinted vacation certificates [Urlaubsscheine]… So, I let myself get photographed in his uniform… Karlchen issued me in my real name and with my photograph a Wehrmacht ID and every three weeks issued me a vacation certificate so that I did not have to wear a uniform.62

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Brummer’s recording is important as it vividly relates to the practical use of false military papers that Jewish men obtained. Getting checked with such papers was one thing, but not wearing a uniform was another and Brummer’s friend’s prudent foresight in equipping him with vacation permit cards provided additional security to Brummer who, like most though not all underground Jewish men, did not wear a Nazi uniform. Moreover, in his behavior and gestures, Brummer adapted to military norms, preparing himself to act inconspicuously if he slid into a compromising situation.

I learned how to walk in a uniform. Then I had to learn by heart all the Wehrmacht jargon so that in a worst case, I could address my superior properly and most importantly, greet properly. Which was not that easy. As Brummer’s case indicates, living illegally underground required tremendous adaptation, a high level of preparedness and a great degree of luck. Trying to defy deportation and murder, German Jewish men and women found creative ways to camouflage their true identities. As some Jewish men pretended to be soldiers, typically on a home visit, they not only required the proper identifications but they also needed to internalize and enact the masculine behaviors and gestures of German soldiers. Performing the Hitler salute and demonstrating a military-bodily comportment were part of the camouflaging behaviors that required mental preparation.

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63 Orbach recalls in his memoir an episode when he was frightened to encounter a SS man in one of the billiard halls, only to find out that this man was also an illegal Jew who somehow had acquired an authentic SS uniform and a gun. See Orbach, Soaring Underground, 122. Pretending to be exempt from the military, Ralph Neuman acquired SA papers, a plan that, however, backfired as by 1944, SA men no longer were exempted. Neuman was able to escape from prison just before his deportation East. See Ralph Neuman, Memories from My Early Life in Germany, 1926-1946 (Berlin: GDW, 2006).
64 Brummer, “My Illegal Life in Germany,” 3.
6. Jewish Men in the Underground

With the war approaching its end in 1944, more Jewish “illegs” – as they called themselves – developed new confidence in being able to survive the war. As more and more German civilians became victims of air raids and thus lost all their possessions including their passports and IDs, more underground Jews had the courage to register themselves as bombed-out, non-Jewish victims, who then were issued temporary IDs that qualified them to receive food ration cards and shelter. However, the fear that their secrets would get unraveled never fully escaped them. To the very end, the Gestapo fanatically scrutinized suspects. Furthermore, even then, Jewish men’s precarious situation did not dissolve. When the Nazis in their desperation decided to enlist the remaining male civilian population in a national militia (Volkssturm) in the summer of 1944, Jewish men with their false IDs, of course, could not escape their conscription unless they had by then fully submerged and did not enter the public sphere until the end of the war.
Conclusion:

In their memoirs, German Jewish men and women recalled the challenges and dangers they faced while living underground. As Rolf Joseph succinctly put it:

Hundreds of illegals, as we called ourselves, were living like us: We would ride in the S-Bahn or U-Bahn till late at night, always in fear of being stopped to show our identification cards with the large J on them. We spent nights in parks and woods and when the weather was very bad, in railway station washrooms.65

Yet, as Beate Kosmala and Claudia Schoppmann have argued, the political and economic wartime conditions affected the illegal lives of men and women differently and Jewish women had a higher chance of survival.66 Especially childless women could move around less conspicuously in the public and could find work. Kosmala asserts that women were not only more (financially) independent of the help of non-Jews, but were better camouflaged by the work they performed.67

This chapter has shifted the focus to the experiences of Jewish men and their idiosyncratic challenges and coping mechanisms in their attempts to escape their planned murder. Next to the intersecting factors of age, physical constitution, alleged Jewishness in appearance and material resources available to them, gender played a crucial role in underground life. The risk for younger or middle-aged men to be apprehended was considerably higher as every man not in military uniform was suspected of being a deserter, especially after the summer of 1944 when all men aged 16 to 60 had to participate in Germany’s last reserves, the Volkssturm militia. To survive, Jewish

men more so than women had to appear as little as possible in the public sphere. To do so, men used strategies such as finding protection with trustworthy friends or helpers, some of whom turned out to be single German women who in their solitude were longing for (younger) male companions. Alternatively, some men, depending on circumstances, altered their physical appearance to look womanly, thus concealing their male gender and sex. These tactics of survival were thus performative, as they were based on the circumstance that there was an overrepresentation of women at the time, a fact that these men had no control over but made best possible use of.

Most commonly, however, Jewish men sought ways to obtain forged identification papers that typically identified them as Wehrmacht soldiers. If they did not possess any papers and were stopped, they were in great danger of being apprehended and deported. All in all, we can discern a hybridity of masculinities that ranged from pretentiously adhering to hegemonic norms of military masculinity to subservient masculinity that entailed the camouflaging of their masculine bodies. All the gendered adaptations were understood as temporary interventions and means of surviving a war that by 1944 was clearly approaching its still distant end. Jewish men’s gendered experiences, gendered risks and gendered coping mechanisms, in their fluid varieties and heterogeneity, constitute essential elements of Jews’ strong will to resist and survive. As Heinrich Busse summed up his survival: “This was definitively an achievement. It required willpower and determination, as well as quick thinking, but I also cultivated a lot of dumb luck.”

69 Walter Frankenstein’s story is one of exceptional luck. Born in 1924, he was subject to several ID checks between 1943 and 1945. Each time, he lied and pretended that he was a foreign forced laborer, speaking only broken German with an accent. See Klaus Hillenbrand, ed. Nicht mit Uns: Das Leben von Leonie und Walter Frankenstein (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008), 94. The low number of survivors, however, makes it likely that many illegals were not successful with fabricated stories alone. German authorities required proof such as work IDs or military papers.
70 Atina Grossmann, “The Survivors were few and the Dead were many: Jewish Identity and Memory in Occupied Berlin,” in Jüdische Welten: Juden in Deutschland vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart, eds. Beate Meyer & Marion Kaplan (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005), 329.
Conclusion

In the end, one might ask: Why does such a specific study of German-Jewish men and their gender identities during the Third Reich matter? Some might argue that ultimately, Jewish men and women perished in equal numbers in the Holocaust, regardless of their sex and gender, and it is thus more warranted to study the people who turned into perpetrators and the processes and structures that enabled a crime of such enormity to take place in the first place. But such an approach relegates European Jews to passive objects of Nazi despotism who had no control over their lives.

In 1933, no German Jew could imagine a place like Auschwitz, and – unlike Jews in many other parts of Europe – a majority of German Jews never had to as they were able to emigrate in time. An elusive focus on the end result, the murder of more than six million human beings, often deflects from a historical trajectory that seeks to explain the experiences, the reactions, the gradual adaptations and different forms of resistance which Jews in Germany maintained or developed over the course of twelve years. If we want to understand what moved and motivated German Jews in their behaviors, in their attempts to survive and cope with the Nazi regime, then gender as an intersectional category of analysis, together with the other categories of class, “race,” age and citizenship becomes an invaluable tool that historians should readily deploy.

In this dissertation, I have studied Jewish constructions of masculinity in the Third Reich and further interpreted the variety of experiences by German-Jewish men who developed different strategies to overcome discrimination in their lives while trying to preserve their identities of being German, Jewish and male. Chapter 1 showed what many Jewish men wanted to be seen as and continued in performative ways – patriotic citizen-soldiers – and what the
Nazis took away from them. In contrast, Chapter 2 illustrated what Jewish men did not want to be – defamed as racial defilers and vicious rapists of youthful women – but which the Nazis imposed on them in their propaganda and legislation. In a similar vein, Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated Jewish men’s attempt to preserve a status quo and remain in meaningful employment and positions of authority at home. Defending their roles as primary breadwinners for their families, Jewish men hoped for more than just to make a living. Providing for and protecting their families as caring husbands and mentoring fathers, Jewish men struggled to adhere to a set of traditional practices of hegemonic masculinity. While both chapters focused on what Jewish men needed to do to articulate and perform their masculinity, Chapters 5 and 6 put the focus again on what the Nazis inflicted upon men, violence in the first case, and the intention of murder in the second. With an unprecedented outbreak of violence directed against Jews, and men in particular, in the 1930s, Jewish men started to adapt and develop strategies of hide and escape that some of them later, albeit under different, war-driven circumstances and with more camouflaging tactics involved, were able to utilize.

What can we learn from this work and what is the bigger picture? The practice of conceptualizing, in Connell’s terminology, hegemonic conceptions of masculinity is still in place today though the ideas and norms that have shaped German hegemonic masculinity in the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries certainly have shifted. Whereas aggrandizing the military and linking it to masculinity was once embedded in mainstream discourses, social practices and legal frameworks, a conciliatory, non-martial though still corporeal ideal of masculinity has become prevalent in modern Germany. While a culture of nationalism coupled with military masculinity in places like the United States continues to reciprocate meaning and importance, and often features in cultural productions like Hollywood films, in Germany a discernible
pacifist zeitgeist has emerged that expects young men to obtain a university degree or vocational rather than military training. On the other hand, while Germany may indeed have developed into a militarized society in the late 19th century, as Karen Hagemann has pointed out historians have too often focused exclusively on the role of the military and overlooked what she calls “pacifist masculinity,” a critique that Stefanie Schüler-Springorum also voices.¹ This dissertation, as a result, has not universalized German culture in the early 20th century as having cherished only military doctrines in civil society. Instead, this study has devoted equal space to additional markers and practices of hegemonic masculinity, looking at men also in their roles as working income-earners and as fathers and husbands. This too constituted (and still constitutes) a hegemonic form of heterosexual masculinity. The implications of understanding the multiple facets of masculinity can be wide-reaching. It is no coincidence that a high proportion of war refugees from Syria and migrants from Africa, who hope to build a new economic existence for themselves and their families, are men.

Though the situation which German-Jewish men faced in the 1930s and early 1940s is not comparable to contemporary Germany or any other society, and the apotheosis of German militarism together with its heroes has ended, certain continuities persist. In the early 20th century, visual and textual discourses of the hypersexualized Jewish male, as analyzed in Chapter 2, were nourished on the fantasies and fears of Germans who harbored radical, völkisch and racist ideas. Eighty years later, discrimination and calls for segregation based on allegedly dangerous sexualities by alien men continue to surface in European and other societies. Again, this can be witnessed in recurring debates on the alleged numerical overrepresentation of males

Conclusion

among immigrants and refugees from overwhelmingly Muslim countries, debates that imply that foreign men are irreversibly distinct in their culture and social behavior and inappropriately approach and assault German women in public pools and social gatherings.2

Outside the context of stigmatizing foreign minority groups of men, masculinity continues to be defined by identification and differentiation. As Germany surprises world economists with its robust economy and low unemployment figures, it is expected of men, and more so than of women, to have a job outside the home. Men without a proper job and an income, unable to provide for themselves and their families, find themselves at the bottom of a social hierarchy that continues to be governed by gender expectations and conventions. In this regard, the stigmatization that Jewish men faced as unemployed males or that they assigned to themselves in Nazi Germany, though in a radically different context, is not entirely dissimilar to contemporary images of marginalized men who due to their unemployment status find themselves on the edge of society.

Furthermore, men’s exposure to a higher risk of violence, especially during conflicts and war, continues. As Adam Jones has made clear, able-bodied middle-aged men are typically the first lethal victims in any violent conflict.3 Starting in 1933, Jewish men were the first Jewish victims of physical harassment, brutalization and murder. Because men are typically regarded as the greater threat, they continue to be singled out and victimized first. Among the list of more contemporary instances, the horrendous Srebrenica massacre in former Yugoslavia in July 1995 showed how gender-biased warfare can be. Of the 8,000 casualties, all were Muslim men. As important and warranted as it is for rescue efforts to focus on women and children, as these

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2 Such as during New Year’s Eve celebration in German cities like Cologne and Hamburg on December 31, 2015.
groups represent the weakest and most helpless of the abused, it is crucial to talk more about men’s status as both perpetrators and victims.

Finally, this dissertation has had much to say about resistance. Many years ago, Werner Ring distinguished several types of resistance during World War II, including symbolic variants. Today much attention in the media and news continues to focus on physical, militarist resistance against repressive regimes – again the present civil war in Syria is a prominent example – yet resistance can be subtler. Many of the Jewish men analyzed in this dissertation were able in multiple, pragmatic but also symbolic ways to resist and defy Nazi intentions. Jewish men’s performative practices, which were based on social, cultural and gender norms to which German-Jewish men subscribed, such as their continued expression of military masculinity or their remarkable resilience in maintaining an economic presence, demonstrate how German Jews found ways to actively and consciously fight back. The numerous notes of protest pertaining to Jewish men’s exclusion from the military illustrate this, and Jews’ initially successful intervention in the drafting of the Civil Service Law that allowed thousands of Jewish men to continue in their professions for years is striking proof of overt resistance. By going underground and thus refusing to comply with the orders of the state authorities, Jewish men and women chose a form of courageous and open resistance with gender-specific idiosyncrasies.

Yet there were even subtler forms of resistance. Continuing in their everyday lives with practices and behaviors that we might consider normal and benign were for Germans Jews in the 1930s quite the contrary. Going out to meet women was a risk that many men continued to undertake. Working at home, doing unpaid, intellectual work gave fulfillment to some men and prevented them from becoming despondent. As some Jewish men even found pride even in

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forced labor, they symbolically resisted the dehumanizing intent that the Nazis had conspired to impose. And as fathers and husbands unexpectedly spent more time at home, they did not appear effeminate. Many made the best out of their situation, developing a new level of affection for their loved ones and taking on new responsibilities, such as teaching their children. Though separated and segregated from gentile society, Jewish men did not become superfluous as the Nazis might have intended but took on new roles that they assigned to themselves with meaning.

A study of Jewish masculinity in Nazi Germany has implications that go beyond a constricted national and temporal focus and relate to political, social, cultural and economic issues, discourses and trends in today’s world. Gender studies can serve as powerful intermediaries in understanding conflict and inequalities in the modern world. The marginalization of German-Jewish men in the Third Reich illuminates the fact that injustice is not only and always committed by guns and laws. As Jewish men were marginalized in the Third Reich, the attacks on their gender identities were no minor attempts to ridicule and ostracize Jews from mainstream society. In their shifting strategies, the Nazis severely undermined the practices of Jewish manhood. But even the Nazis, in their contempt for human lives, could not prevent Jewish men, while marginalized in their masculinities, from remaining human.
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