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How Do you Repair a Broken World? Conflict(ing) Archives after the Holocaust

Aliza Luft[1]

Abstract
In contrast to the portrayal of archives as neutral sites that contain evidence of times past, this paper examines the construction of three archives during and after the Holocaust to highlight the challenges involved in gathering, preserving, and sharing documents produced by victimized populations. Specifically, I analyze the construction of, and conflicts among, the archives of the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, and the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Each archive purports to contain the history of Jews in France during the Holocaust and strived in its aftermath not only to gather the remnants of European Jewish history but to reconstitute it, leading to contestations over what it meant to be Jewish in turn. Through analysis of the conflicts among these three archives, I show how debates over the possession of documents after genocide became symbolic debates about Jewish history and identity that would shape each of these archives for generations to come. I generalize from the example to discuss the practical implications of working with conflicting archives and examine the broader lessons for social scientists who wish to give "voice to the voiceless" by working with documents produced by victimized populations.

Keywords Archives · Conflict · Holocaust · France

> *"Look what a crazy guy is thinking about these days? Archives! Like they might accomplish something."*
> -Zosa Szajkowski, April 22, 1941[1]

[1]Szajkowski to the Tcherikowers, April 22, 1941, in YIVO RG 81, folios 151,158–61, in Leff (2015, 62).

The duty to repair the world through good deeds and service, also known as *tikkun olam* (in Hebrew, תיקון עולם), is widely considered by Jews worldwide to be a pillar of Jewish tradition.

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Introduction

Sociologists have long used archives in their research, yet there is little sociological interrogation of "the archive" as a site of knowledge production and erasure. We encounter boxes, folders, and microfilm of correspondence, records, photographs, and other source materials once they have already been organized, catalogued, described, and housed in an archival institution. This necessary and tedious process of categorizing and classifying archival documents ensures their long-term preservation and access for future generations of researchers as well as the general public. Yet it also plays a significant role in the context of discovery—the questions we think to ask—and the context of explanation—the answers we think to use—when researching complex social phenomena. Quiet, sterile, and characteristically laden with rules, there is often a latent assumption that archives are neutral sites wherein scholars access documents to produce knowledge. This assumption of neutrality elides the fact that archives themselves are sites of power, inequality, and erasure that *always already* shape what Foucault (2012) calls "the said" and "the unsaid" of knowledge and understanding. Further, though the archive is a topic of heated debate across disciplines and fields in the social sciences and humanities (e.g., Cook and Schwartz 2002; Derrida 1995; Lowry 2017; Mbembe 2002; Risam 2018; Stoler 2009; Taylor 2003; Trouillot 1995), surprisingly, sociologists have intervened little in this debate, and rarely is a reflective and reflexive interrogation of the archive part of comparative-historical research. This is surprising not only because we frequently use archives to produce rigorous sociological research, but also because the institutions themselves are laden with social and political histories of interest to sociologists.

This article analyzes the relationships among three conflict archives to consider the power dynamics between them and the stories each are able to tell, or not tell, as social and political circumstances have allowed. In the social sciences, conflict archives are increasingly being mined as a data source for scholars of political violence (Balcells and Sullivan 2018). Typically, these studies consider conflict archives to comprise the real-time documentation produced by governments and combatants during war. In contrast, this article examines *civilian* conflict archives—documents produced by non-combatants, many of whom are often either targeted for violence or caught in its crosshairs—and the unique promises and pitfalls of working with such data. After a brief discussion of what some of these pitfalls are, this study examines one in depth: the dilemma of *possession* following mass death and displacement, and how such dilemmas are tied to the meaning-making of a conflict after the violence has ended.

Specifically, I examine the construction of the archives of the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris (hereafter, CDJC), the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, and the Yad Vashem International Institute for Holocaust Research in Jerusalem. Each archive purports to contain, among other things, the history of Jews in France during the Holocaust. Yet in the process of collecting documents for a book on a similar topic, I frequently found duplicates as well as fragmentary records, the originals of entire collections produced in one country residing elsewhere, and the division of documents such that some of an organizations' records were available in one archive while the remainders were in another. This led me to wonder what influenced the placement of documents in each archive, particularly given the archival principle of provenance.

The results of this study reveal significant debates in the aftermath of the Holocaust concerning Jewish victims' archival propriety and classification: the CDJC, YIVO, and Yad Vashem (along with the Jewish Historical General Archives) each wanted to centralize the archives of French Jewry in their institutions, though YIVO and Yad Vashem both saw them

as part of a larger project of collecting the remnants of European Jewish history more broadly. There was also a failed attempt by the CDJC to create a broader transnational European Archive in France. Each archive hoped that in possessing the past, they could shape the future. The CDJC aimed to reintegrate Jews in France practically, by collecting documents that could help with post-war restitution, and symbolically, by demonstrating Jews were active in the resistance against Vichy throughout the war. YIVO believed the future of European Jewry was migrating to the United States and wanted its archive to reflect these changes, helping to construct New York as the new home for Yiddish life and culture. Yad Vashem and the Jewish Historical General Archives intended for their archive to facilitate the nation-building of Israel as a Jewish homeland. Hence, symbolic debates about Jewish history and identity infused debates over the possession of documents, shaping the archives for generations to come.

The article begins with a discussion of the nascent but growing field of research that uses conflict archives to understand processes of war and violence. I then briefly review the background to set the stage for an analysis of Jewish victims' archives in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The following section analyzes the construction of, and contention among, the CDJC, YIVO, and Yad Vashem along with the Jewish Historical General Archives. Next, I discuss the symbolic debates that emerged concerning the meanings each archive hoped to attribute to the Holocaust by possessing documents produced by Europe's Jews. I conclude by summarizing the lessons of the analysis for social scientists working with conflict archives, particularly those produced by victimized populations.

Conflict Archives

Recent years have witnessed a growth in scholarship examining data from conflict archives. Defined as "catalogs of written material systematically produced as part of a political contest between a government force and an armed challenger (either domestic or international) and later collected and preserved for public access," conflict archives have several advantages when it comes to the study of wartime violence (Balcells and Sullivan 2018, 1).

First and foremost, conflict archives can provide insight into how combat is understood by those participating in it as a war is ongoing. This is in contrast to post-hoc recollections gathered through interviews or surveys where combatants might modify their responses. Concerns about falsification are especially common in contexts where combatants, government or otherwise, target unarmed civilians. In research on genocide, for example, scholars who work with perpetrator interviews regularly mention that respondents' might not be truthful concerning their involvement in atrocities and have numerous incentives to lie about their motivations for participation in violence, emphasizing factors such as obedience to authority or group pressures as a way to minimize their involvement. In contrast, conflict archives can reveal combatants' feelings about their actions and experiences as they are occurring—influences on their decision-making in real-time—thus mitigating concerns about falsification.

Second, conflict archives can reveal information produced from a wider range of times and contexts than those typically gathered by observers such as journalists and non-governmental organizations, whose reports of violence regularly inform academic research. For reasons of safety and security, outside actors tend to prioritize areas and actions that are more easily observable (Balcells and Sullivan 2018; Baum and Zhukov 2015; Cohen and Green 2012; Davenport and Ball 2002; Weidmann, 2015). We therefore know significantly more about the

urban core of conflicts and the outcomes of visible acts of violence than about conflicts on the periphery and clandestine operations throughout war. Conflict archives can illuminate aspects of violence frequently concealed by the danger of warfare.

Third, working with conflict archives can help mitigate some of the ethical concerns that arise as a result of conducting fieldwork in violent contexts or with people who have survived or participated in violence (for excellent recent overviews, see Campbell 2017 and Cronin-Furman and Lake 2018). Data produced in the midst of war, stored and then recovered years later for analytical purposes, does objectively less harm to its creators than interviews or surveys, both of which can cause respondents to relive the psychological traumas of wartime violence and even place them at risk of physical harm insofar as respondents can be subject to reprisals if they share information that does not align with dominant post-war narratives. There are also numerous ethical dilemmas concerning power imbalances between researchers and the researched, even when IRB protocols have been followed and positional reflexivity attended to at each step of the way. A scholar may obtain consent to interview ex-combatants, but people may already be in situations that compromise their freedom and autonomy, thus making consent constrained, at best (Fujii 2012, 718). Conflict archives can protect against some of these dilemmas.

Yet conflict archives are no panacea. For researchers interested in understanding the mechanisms and processes underlying conflict, not to mention the many influences shaping actors' decisions to act or not act violently, conflict archives present several concerns. Best-known and most commonly addressed by scholars of war and violence is that political biases can shape when and what documents are released to the public for analysis. Conflict-related evidence is often released strategically by combatants to portray their preferred perspective. In contrast, damaging documents tend to be hidden or destroyed. Post-war, victorious governments are especially likely to release documents that support their political agendas and conceal those that don't (Balcells and Sullivan 2018).

These pitfalls are frequently attended to by social scientists working with conflict archives. In the 2018 special issue on conflict archives published in *Journal of Peace Research*, 100% of the articles published discussed concerns about reliability and validity, missing data, records destroyed or hidden, and other possible limitations that might have influenced the authors' results. Yet lacking from this research and from the scholarship on war and violence that works with archival data more broadly, is the challenge of including civilians' voices, which are often missing from conflict archives altogether. This is despite the fact that in many conflicts (indeed, in most contemporary wars), unarmed civilians bear the brunt of violence between two warring "elephants."[2] This holds true whether the conflict is an international war, civil war, or genocide.

Furthermore, civilians shape wartime patterns of violence. In civil war, for example, civilians influence levels of violence and whether violence against them is indiscriminate or targeted, through their willingness to cooperate with the government versus challengers by providing information; economic and material resources such as food, clothing, supplies, and medical care; political or logistical support; and secrecy (Arjona 2016; Balcells 2017; Kalyvas 2006; Kaplan 2017; Parkinson 2013; Petersen 2002; Steele 2017; Viterna 2013; Wood 2003). In genocide, non-targeted civilians impact violence against victimized populations by doing

[2] https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/protecting-civilians; The term "elephants" here is in reference to a lyric by the musical group, Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars, that itself paraphrases an well-known African proverb, "When two elephants are fighting/ (The grass dem' a-suffer)/ Which is the position of the civilian?"

nothing (being a bystander), by collaborating and thus contributing to the legitimization and perpetration of violence (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018; Luft 2020a), or by organizing resistance and rescue efforts (Braun 2019; Fox and Brehm 2018). Targeted civilians, too, can cooperate, cope, evade, or resist genocide, even while under severe constraints (Einwohner and Maher 2011; Finkel 2017; Soyer 2014).[3] Of course, violent entrepreneurs have a much greater ability to shape conflict outcomes in each situation, but civilians' actions in response always matter. As a result, we cannot understand war without also attending to the perspectives of civilians caught in its crosshairs. Yet rarely is this documentation included in conflict archives.

Subsequently, one solution that has emerged in recent years is the collection and analysis of oral history—the sustained effort by trained interviewers to gather and preserve "the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events."[4] Oral history is unique insofar as it allows survivors of violent pasts to tell their stories unfiltered and unadulterated, from their perspectives. Karida Brown (2016, 16) explains, "this method [centers interviewees] as protagonists in their own histories, transforming their interview status from that of a 'research subject' to a 'research participant' and a historian of their own subjectivity." Given the strong desire that many (but not all) survivors of violence have to inscribe themselves and their memories in history, creating a record that preserves their voices is a powerful antidote to the focus in conflict archives on warring parties' perspectives. Yet like all methods, oral history has its pitfalls in addition to its promises.

Aside from the challenges of collecting post-hoc evidence of violence discussed above, knowledge that oral history is often created to serve as witness can lead to the problem of "double vision," articulated by Rachel Einwohner (2011) in her research with Holocaust survivors' testimonies. The concept of "seeing double" refers to "the simultaneous enactment of distinct identities [among researchers of violence], each of which has separate and, typically, competing implications for appropriate behavior vis-à-vis research subjects"—in this case, the dual challenges of being both a researcher of, and witness to, the suffering caused by genocide (418, drawing on Jacobs 2004). The problem of double vision emerges when working with interview and survey data on violence as well, but it is especially likely to be acute when working with survivors' documentation of violence perpetrated against them and can lead to further dilemmas, such as which archives to use and exclude when the original purpose of the documentation was to bear witness in the first place. Selecting some documents as representative, and not others, can lead to feelings of guilt and fears of complicity in victims' erasure.

A related issue is the removal of victims' and survivors' names during the write-up phase of research on violence, in keeping with confidentiality expectations of IRB. Forced anonymity can strip subjects of their identities when their original intention in recording their stories was specifically to have them heard. Einwohner recalls how "the removal of [survivors'] identifying information… [had] eerie similarities to some of the kinds of treatments that the individuals in [her] sample had experienced during the Holocaust" (422).[5] Likewise, the conversion

[3] Importantly, and as I have argued elsewhere (e.g., Luft 2015, 2020b), in many conflicts, these categories are not so neat. A perpetrator in one situation can be victimized or a rescuer in another, suggesting that even the phrase "victims' archives" is worthy of unpacking and analysis, as who defines belongingness in any of these categories is informed by contentious politics.

[4] https://www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/

[5] This is but one example of the ethical challenges of working with Holocaust survivors' testimonies, discussed by Einwohner. The others include concerns about how the "standard protocols and practices of social science data management can unintentionally dehumanize research subjects" and problems with writing up the results.

of testimony into digital data can feel especially violent, particularly in the case of the Holocaust, as converting humans into numbers resembles some of the Nazi's dehumanizing tactics. Oral history is not immune to quantification, as scholars can search testimonies for keywords (e.g., "abductions," "body searches," "child deaths"—to name several available at the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive) and convert their results into datasets.[6] Though this can have some positive outcomes—Todd Presner (2016) explains how computational processes can democratize witnessing and allow for the identification of relationships and patterns not otherwise possible, given the large quantity of testimony—the point is, even the moral dimensions of working with oral history are fraught with complexity at each stage in the process.

Accordingly, a third challenge that may arise when working with oral history is the separation of data from the context of production. In other words, although civilian testimony provides unique insights into how non-combatants perceive and respond to wartime violence, "social scientists," writes Evgeny Finkel (2017, 203), "tend to overlook the contexts in which documents were produced, collected, and preserved." When working with oral history, the context of production is especially important as it can shape what details are or are not included, what information is and is not collected, and how the information is preserved. As an example, scholars of sexual violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust note that rape and sexual abuse was not documented in the same way as other horrors perpetrated against Jews, but this does not mean Jewish women were not sexually violated. Rather, the shame associated with sexual violence led women to frequently conceal these experiences in their post-war testimonies (Hedgepeth and Saidel 2010). Additionally, since most historians used to be men and the subject of rape rarely emerged in oral history projects on the Holocaust until recently, men did not think to ask about it, they did not want to ask about it, and women did not want to offer the information.

Last but not least, there remains the problem in research on war and violence of missing voices—of victimized civilians killed during conflict who cannot share their stories and experiences.[7] Inevitably, this results in over-representing the experiences of survivors and those who were willing and able to be interviewed at that time (Finkel 2017, 211). Dan Stone (2017, 81) explains, "When working on the Holocaust, 'survivorship bias' takes on an added meaning, in that the points of evidence that remain—that is, those who are able to talk as eyewitnesses of the crimes—are by definition exceptional, for the majority did not survive." When research on violence relies exclusively on data produced by survivors, it inevitably excludes the experiences and perspectives of victims who were killed. What can we do?

If one goal of archival research on violence is to include victims' stories from their perspectives—to give voice to the voiceless—a seemingly obvious answer is to collect as much evidence of their experiences before and during war as possible. But even this is fraught with difficulty. As this article reveals through comparative historical analysis of efforts to build

[6] The full list of indexing terms can be viewed at https://vhaonline.usc.edu/keywordsearch/keywordSearch.

[7] This problem is not limited to data on war and genocide but other forms of violence, as well. For example, a large and excellent body of work on colonialism has discussed these concerns in depth (e.g., Bailkin 2015; Bastian 2006; Shetty and Bellamy 2000; Stoler 2009), while African-American historian and scholar of literature Saidiya Hartmann (1997, 2007) has powerfully reimagined the experiences of enslaved women whose voices are frequently missing in archives using what she terms "critical fabulations," a combination of archival and historical research with critical theory and fiction. In historical and archival research on genocide, Caswell (2010, 2014), Robinson (2014), and Weld (2014) have produced excellent studies of record keeping, its processes, silences, and challenges, in the wake of mass violence.

archives in the wake of the Holocaust, actors who wish to preserve victims' voices compete and conflict over what ought to be remembered and how. These conflicts in turn shape how archival evidence of the Holocaust has been preserved and made available, intimately tying struggles over possession to historical research on the past. I examine the relationship between emergent Jewish political communities after the Holocaust and the archives each sought to create and show how, rather than straightforward data collection, the issue of preserving the history of the Holocaust was subject to contentious debate. Concerning the Holocaust in France, these debates resulted in the construction of three different archives, each tied to a different articulation of Jewish peoplehood: an assimilationist archive (CDJC) that sought to embed the history of Jews within an existing nation-state, a diasporic archive (YIVO) committed to collecting materials not bound by physical space, and a state-building archive (Yad Vashem) focused on collecting materials and bringing them into the narrative of an emerging nation-state.[8] Hence, conflict archives became conflicting archives as the politics of remembrance became embedded in the institutional construction and function of the archives themselves.

Background

Nazi looting of Jewish archives and libraries was an important part of the Holocaust. As the Nazis sought to exterminate European Jewry, they simultaneously sought throughout the Holocaust to collect evidence of Jewish culture in pursuit of several goals: "to impoverish Jews, to destroy their culture, and to provide Nazi scholars with material for study" (Leff 2015, 85). Concerning the latter, in April 1939, the notorious ideologue Alfred Rosenberg established the Institute for Study of the Jewish Question (*Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage*). Having been assigned by Hitler to wage "ideological and spiritual war against Jews and Judaism," Rosenberg formed the Institute as part of the larger Advanced School of the NSDAP (Hohe Schule der NSDAP [abbreviation in German for the Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party, referred to English as the Nazi Party]) in Frankfurt am Main. His goal was to make the Hohe Schule an elite university were Nazi officials could study the regime's enemies and advance racial science (Billig 1963; Steinweis 2006). To do so, Rosenberg required materials.

Subsequently, in July 1940, Rosenberg established the Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce (*Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg*, hereafter ERR) to pilfer Jews' cultural property and prepare it for institute research. The ERR operated in multiple countries during the war, plundering the materials of some 375 archives, 957 libraries, 531 research and educational institutes, and 402 museums throughout Eastern Europe alone (Herman 2008, 9). "As a result," the Jewish historian Jason Lustig explains, "the archives and libraries of the Jews of Europe met a fate analogous to that of European Jewry on the whole: just as entire communities were destroyed and the survivors scattered, so too were archives lost and remnants scattered throughout Europe" (Lustig 2017, 523).

In France, the looting began almost immediately after the start of the occupation. No form of material culture was spared: archives, historical manuscripts, books, art—even furniture and tapestries—were stolen (Billig 1963; Coeuré 2007; Grimsted 2005; Leff 2015; Nicholas 1994; Petropoulos 1996; Reymes 2000; Simpson 1997). The contents of Paris' Alliance Israélite

[8] I am grateful to Sunmin Kim for his helpful framing of these three projects.

Universelle (AIU), in particular, proved a remarkable heist. Before the war, the AIU had renovated its stacks, which contained some 100,000 volumes, including the collections belonging to famous Middle Eastern scholar Salomon Munk, the great French rabbi Zadoc Kahn, and the Cairo Genizah (Kuperminc 2001, 3). After the ERR's rampage, Rosenberg and his men carried away some 700 cartons of archival documents, books, and manuscripts and sent them to Germany. He then confiscated the AIU building itself at 45 rue de la Bruyère, which was reconfigured to serve as the ERR's base of operations (Kuperminc 2001, 5). Under Rosenberg, Paris became a hub for the massive pillaging of Jews' property throughout the war.[9]

Following the theft of Paris, Rosenberg and his men traveled eastward, stealing documents, books, and other artifacts in each country occupied by Nazis. As a result, the Nazis amassed vast caches of Jewish cultural treasures throughout the war. Sometimes, as with the Jewish libraries in Vilna, they would destroy their stolen materials (Herman 2008, 10). For the most part, however, they stored their riches in Frankfurt am Main as well as in castles and caves throughout Germany (Simpson 1997, 280–81). By war's end, countless archives for the study of 'racial research' had been concentrated in Germany's borders (Lustig 2017, 221).

The vast displacement of Jewish archives throughout the Holocaust resulted in a puzzle that lies at the heart of this paper: much as the Nazis failed to extinguish Jewish life in Europe, they also failed to destroy Jewish cultural property. Subsequently, at the end of the war, the Allies and Jews worldwide were faced with a dilemma: to whom should the remains return? The problem of restitution was vexing in a context where most of the archives' owners had been killed and Jewish organizations had been demolished. As a result, Jewish scholars and activists sought to develop archival institutions that could consolidate these scattered remains.

Yet inevitably, the dilemma of restitution became tied to the symbolism of the archives as remnants of a past Jewish life, which also led to questions about its future. The result was not simply a battle over the archives' ownership but also a battle over their meaning. European Jewry, long the center of Jewish tradition, culture, and innovation, no longer existed as such. After the Holocaust, efforts to build archives were thus shaped by the nature and magnitude of the tragedy. Given the profound upheaval caused by the genocide, not to mention the massive death and destruction of entire Jewish communities in Europe, Jews worldwide were presented with a dilemma: how do you repair a broken world and how, while repairing this world, do you preserve the voices—the books, notes, diaries, letters, and meeting minutes, not to mention the music, poetry, photographs, and other artifacts produced by Jews before and during the Holocaust—of those who were killed? The following section examines how Jewish organizations in France, the United States, and Israel struggled in the wake of the Holocaust to claim custody of Europe's Jewish archives and the power to shape their significance for the future.

Salvaged Documents and the Dilemma of Possession

In the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust in France, it was not yet clear where the documents produced by Vichy and the Nazis, nor the massive quantities of materials

[9] For a list of archives dispersed by the ERR, see Patricia Grimstead's remarkable ERR Project, which provides up-to-date information on the current locations of ERR files and related sources worldwide: https://www.errproject.org/guide.php

belonging to Jews, would go (Steinlight 2017). Jewish survivors were dispersed and on the move. Moreover, although 180,000 Jews remained in France after liberation, more than any other Nazi-occupied country in Western Europe, their families, homes, businesses, religious institutions, and community associations had been destroyed (Weinberg 1990, 169). In France and elsewhere, Jews were still coming to terms with the idea that European Jewish life, rich and diverse in culture, tradition, and innovation, no longer existed—at least not as it had before the war (Leff 2015, 202). Instead, the center of gravity in the Yiddish-speaking world was shifting to New York, while in Palestine, efforts to establish a Jewish state that could serve as a homeland for Jews were underway. This presented a challenge for the post-war diaspora: Who got to keep its documents? Where did material evidence of European Jewish history belong? As the dust began to settle and Jews strove to comprehend their new reality, different actors with more or less influence sought to establish research institutions for the preservation of Jewish culture. With them came the dilemma of how to preserve a past that was still unraveling.

In France, the most prominent archival research institute to emerge was the CDJC. The CDJC was founded in Grenoble in April 1943 by Isaac Schneerson, who had escaped from Nazi-occupied Paris to the Vichy-controlled South Paris to the Vichy-controlled South after France's defeat, along with 40 representatives from diverse French Jewish organizations.

Earlier that year, Schneerson had begun to collect documents pertaining to Jewish suffering during the war. Having heard of similar efforts in process by some of the major Jewish organizations in France, including by the Union of French Jews (Union générale des israélites de France; hereafter, UGIF),[10] Schneerson decided to coordinate their efforts. The first meeting was held in his apartment, and its founders outlined their program as follows:

> Above all, we wish to write the Great Book of the martyrdom of French Judaism. For that, it is necessary to collect the vast material on events in the two zones, to study the new legislation and its consequences in every respect: to take stock of the plundered or Aryanised Jewish fortunes; to provide a picture of the sufferings of so many internees, so many deportees, so many Jewish hostages shot; to highlight the heroism of Jewish fighters … to record the attitudes of those in power, in the administration, of the different sections of public opinion; and it is indeed important to take note of the reactions of intellectuals, of the middle and working classes, of the representatives of the old and new parties – of different churches
>
> …In short, we believe it necessary to shed light – in a strictly objective spirit – on all that may have affected Jewish life in France, both favourably and unfavourably. Secondly, it is appropriate to straightaway start preparing a file of claims of the Jews in France, for French and foreign Jews. Thus, our purpose and suggestion is to work together to gather this vast documentation, and from that to draw conclusions.[11]

The purpose of the CDJC was thus to gather evidence of Jewish resistance and heroism in the face of Nazi violence and also to gather evidence of the crimes that were committed against them so they could prepare for when the war was over. From their perspective, it was

[10] The UGIF was an organization established by the Vichy government's Office of Jewish Affairs to consolidate all the Jewish organizations of France into one single unit.

[11] Poznanski (1999, 51) discovered the original document at the Alliance Israélite Universelle, which was then reproduced in Perego and Poznanski (2013, 11) and cited by Heuman (2015, 37) and Jockusch (2012, 52).

important to lay the groundwork for the post-occupation reintegration of Jews in France, including their material restitution.

In April 1943, Grenoble was under Italian Occupation, which meant that its Jews were protected from Nazi brutality as Mussolini refused to round up and deport Jews living under his control. The men who formed the CDJC had no reason to expect they and the thousands of Jews like them who had fled South in search of safety would not survive the war. They therefore saw their purpose as primarily focused on collecting evidence against Nazis and their collaborators to secure restitution for France's Jews once the war was done. As its founders detailed in their initial platform, the documentation they collected would "eventually allow the Jews to take concrete positions [and] formulate them before the League of Nations, which we hope will be more just and stronger this time."[12] A post-war perspective guided their efforts as they assumed they and their Jewish brothers and sisters would survive and remain in France. They also assumed that fellow Jews throughout Europe were acting similarly: accumulating documents to support post-war claims to justice that could help Jewish communities reconstitute themselves in the future.[13] What they couldn't foresee was the near-total destruction of Europe's Jewish communities by war's end.

That said, the founders of the CDJC were not entirely wrong in their belief that document collection projects were underway elsewhere in Europe. Both during and after the Holocaust, Jewish communities throughout Europe gathered evidence of the crimes committed against them, as well as evidence of their cultural life before the war. But some had a different purpose. In contrast to the CDJC's goal of preparing for post-war restitution, other archival projects were organized to gather evidence of Jewish cultural life under the assumption that soon, it might all be gone. For example, the famous *Oyneg Shabbes* archive was organized by Emanuel Ringelblum in the Warsaw Ghetto to record Jewish life under occupation. Its team collected countless documents, testimonies, and reports on the conditions in the ghetto; clippings from the underground press and notes from clandestine schools; transcripts of rabbis' sermons; and more. They filled three milk cans with their documents and buried them underground before the Warsaw ghetto uprising and subsequent liquidation. Like the CDJC, the *Oyneg Shabbes* leadership was committed to postwar justice, but unlike the CDJC, they did not expect to survive to see it.[14]

Meanwhile, only five months after the CDJC was formed, on September 8, 1943, Germans seized the Italian Zone and the situation rapidly deteriorated. Brutal raids swept throughout south-eastern France to search out Jews and round them up for deportation. Subsequently, the documentation center was forced to halt its activities, and its representatives began a desperate search to hide its materials from Nazis and the French *milice*. In the end, three-quarters of what they had collected was lost, including the entire archive of the camp commission, created by Chief Rabbi René Hirschler, also the chaplain for foreign-born Jews in Vichy's internment camps, after Hirschler was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Auschwitz, where he was killed. Four other founding members of the CDJC were also murdered during this time-period:

[12] "Voici quelques mots en ce que nous voulons," Archives of the Central Consistory during World War II, Maurice Moch Collection at the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris, reel 1, folder 4, in Jockusch (2012, 53).

[13] Indeed, the authors of the CDJC's agenda noted, "There is no doubt that at this current moment our coreligionists in other countries are also compiling documentations concerning their respective countries." ibid., in Jockusch (2012, 52).

[14] Emanuel Ringleblum was murdered by Nazis in the Pawiak prison in Warsaw in March 1944. Thus far, two of the three caches of documents from the *Oyneg Shabbes* archive have been recovered. The third is still missing.

Raymond-Raoul Lambert, Léonce Bernheim, and Nahum Hermann also died at Auschwitz. Léo Glaeser was shot by the *milice* in Lyon (Jockusch 2012, 54; 212–16).

When France was liberated in August 1944, the CDJC's remaining members met in Paris. Like many Jewish institutions that had been decimated by the Holocaust, they immediately strove to reconstitute their efforts. Yet this time, the stated mission of the CDJC took on a slightly different tone: not only did they hope to help Jews reclaim lost property, they also endeavored to tell the history of Jews during the Holocaust as distinct from the larger history of the occupation in France. The CDJC thus aimed to become the prime institutional setting for researching the Holocaust in France, even as its main purpose was and remained the collection of evidence necessary to reconstitute Jews' material needs. CDJC director of research Leon Poliakov explained in 1947: "even before the actual historical studies are done, it is our place and duty to support justice."[15] In this case, justice meant rebuilding the Jewish community in France by collecting all possible documentation pertaining to the crimes that had been committed against them. Yet here is where the CDJC's troubles began.

Although the CDJC endeavored to become "the mouthpiece for the Jewish community in France," a different perspective on how to reconstitute Europe's Jewish communities reigned in the United States and Palestine (Heuman 2015, 55). In particular, several institutions in the United States were either founded during the war or expanded their existing missions to gather evidence from Jewish life in Europe and bring it back to the US. From their American perspective, European Jewry was decimated and there was no future for surviving Jews anywhere in Europe, including France. Thus, it was up to American institutions, where the future of *Yiddishkeit* held promise, to seize the mantle.[16] Chief among these was YIVO, which originally established archives in 1925 in Vilnius (Vilna). Sister institutions were also constructed in Berlin, Buenos Aires, New York, and Paris. Yet like the AIU in Paris, YIVO's archives in Europe had been pillaged by the Nazis throughout the war, though not without heroic efforts by Jewish resisters who named themselves the "paper brigades" and smuggled out whatever documents they could (Fishman 1996; Schwarz 2005).

Similarly, after the Holocaust, numerous Jews traveled to Europe to gather European Jewish cultural property and send it back to the United States. YIVO in particular shifted its headquarters to New York and, under the leadership of Max Weinreich, sent scores of *zamlers*[17] to collect testimonies and documents from survivors. These men and women traveled abroad not only with the intention of salvaging YIVO's European remains but also with the intention of salvaging European Jewish cultural property writ large. Rather than restore these remains to the places of their provenance, YIVO and its *zamlers* pursued a different approach. They believed the future of *Yiddishkeit* resided in America and thus so should the documentation of its past. Other institutions, such as the Commission on Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, felt and acted similarly. For example, Hannah Arendt, who at the time served as the executive secretary for the commission, explained their concerns succinctly:

> In view of the wholesale destruction of Jewish life and property by the Nazis, reconstruction of Jewish cultural institutions cannot possibly mean mechanical restoration in their original form, or in all cases, to their previous location. . . . Ultimately it may …

[15] Perego and Poznanski (2013, 11), in Heuman (2015, 49).
[16] *Yiddishkeit* (in Yiddish, יידישקייט) is slang for the many varieties of traditional and Jewish popular culture.
[17] *Zamler* (זאמלער) is the Yiddish word for collector. As discussed further in the paper, YIVO encouraged volunteers from all over the world to become *zamlers* and gather materials for its archive.

> seek to help redistribute the Jewish cultural treasures in accordance with the new needs created by the new situation of world Jewry.[18]

New York-based Jewish elites agreed with those in France that it was important to gather and consolidate evidence of Jewish history in archives dedicated specifically to Jews' experiences, but in contrast to those who wished to keep these documents in the towns and countries of Europe where they originated, they put forth a diaspora nationalist and Yiddishist organizing principle instead (Leff 2015, 137). To them, European Jewish property was the collective property of Jews worldwide. Rather than return their documents to the countries where few Jews remained, they sought to consolidate them in New York where the Yiddish diaspora was growing.

In contrast, in Palestine, a Zionist perspective predominated. According to this perspective, it was the lack of a Jewish state that led to Jews' assimilation in Europe and a subsequent "defect in the Jewish character" that "drained the Jewish people of [their] ability to respond to persecution" in the first place (Heuman 2015, 46; Leff 2015, 44). The Zionists opposed the attempts by surviving Jews in Europe to rebuild their collections there, and they also opposed the diasporic ideology of YIVO. To them, it was necessary to establish a Jewish homeland in order to prevent catastrophes similar to the Holocaust and the pogroms before it from recurring. Central to establishing this homeland was the construction of an archive that situated Palestine as the center of Jewish life and culture.

Similarly, and also from a Zionist perspective, others argued that the lack of a Jewish state resulted in an absence of national and historical consciousness among Europe's Jews, rendering them both uninterested in, and incapable of, keeping archives more generally. Alex Bein, assistant director of the Central Zionist Archives and member of the Palestine Historical and Ethnographic Society's archive committee, asserted in 1950 that "in Europe, where there is no belief in the future, there is also no real connection to the past, especially among Jews."[19] To him and others engaged in documentation collection projects in Palestine, the construction of Jewish archives alongside a Jewish state was not only necessary to protect and preserve Jewish people and their history, but to create a historical consciousness among Jews *as* Jews first and foremost. Hence, the establishment of a Jewish state and the construction of a total Jewish archive went hand in hand. The result was the Jewish Historical General Archives (later the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, or CAHJP) and, with specific regard to the Holocaust, the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center.

The Jewish Historical General Archives was originally established in 1938 but, until February 1947, lacked the institutional support and physical space necessary to store its documents and make them available for research (Lustig 2017, 226). Its mission was "to bring together in all possible completeness the sources of Jewish history in the Diaspora and the land [of Israel]… [representing] the entire archival material on the history of the Jews" (227). Such an ambitious undertaking would have been impossible without the Holocaust, given that so much of the Nazis' pilfered property had no clear heir. It was only because of the destruction caused by the Holocaust that the General Archives could even envision consolidating documents produced by Europe's Jews in Palestine. The Zionists capitalized on the challenges of postwar restitution to claim that the proper home for Jewish cultural materials was in the soon-to-be Jewish homeland itself.

[18] Commission on Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, "Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-Occupied Countries," supplement to *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 1 (1946): 6, in Leff (2015, 128).
[19] Alex Bein, Yisra'el Halpern to Ben Zion Dinaburg, "'Al hatsalat ha-'arkhiyonim ha-yehudim min ha-golah ve-rikuzam ba-'arets," 29 Oct. 1951, CZA P64/148/1/1 in Lustig (2017, 279).

Following this, the documentary collection efforts of the Jewish Historical General Archives proceeded much like those of YIVO in the United States. For example, in 1941, the archives' original founder, Josef Meisl, traveled to Europe to gather whatever he could and bring it back to Jerusalem for the planned archive (235). Once the Holocaust had ended, Alex Bein, who became colloquially known as Israel's "foreign minister of archives," likewise traveled to Europe in search of even greater acquisitions.[20] In addition to collecting Jewish communal archives from Germany and Austria—by 1952, the General Archives had received documents from over 350 communities in both countries; by 1957, the number had reached 800—Bein and his colleagues surveyed the archives in France and Italy to microfilm what they deemed important and create registers of their holdings.[21] They also developed partnerships with, and secured donations from, refugee and immigrant groups—though not without the occasionally contentious negotiation with existing Jewish communities still in Europe and the municipal and state archives that held their documents.

Finally, the leadership of the Jewish Historical General Archives regularly dispatched representatives with local ties to Jewish communities in Europe to gather European Jewish archives and send them back to Jerusalem. When Bein reported in December 1949 to the staff of the Zionist Archives following his first expedition to Europe, he proclaimed: "We must salvage the archives similar to how we are realizing the saving of the Jews of the Diaspora (Golah)."[22] Always, the goal was to consolidate in Jerusalem as many documents produced by diasporic Jews as possible, creating a total archive that would tell the history of world Jewry as if it were one, with Israel as its homeland.

Of course, a key component of the General Archives' project was documentation of the Holocaust. Initially, this conflicted with the goals of the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center, which likewise aimed to become an archive that could tell the entire history of Jewish life in the Diaspora and its supposed complete destruction. Rather quickly, however, the two decided to collaborate, even going so far as to send Alex Bein abroad in search of documents on behalf of the General Archives, the Central Zionist Archives for which he was already an assistant director, and Yad Vashem. What Yad Vashem shared in common with the others was the goal of bringing all Jewish archival material from Europe to Jerusalem to reinforce the Israeli state-building project in the wake of the Holocaust.

Moreover, as with the Zionist perspective more generally, the leadership of Yad Vashem felt that surviving Jews in Europe were incapable of storing and studying their documents and that they needed the State of Israel, as well as an archive that represented it, to successfully project their nationalist aims. In fact, Yad Vashem's first director, historian Ben-Zion Dinur, perceived the Holocaust as a magnified version of Jewish history in the diaspora more generally: so long as Jews lacked a homeland to call their own, they would flourish in their various communities before an inevitable period of violence prompted by "non-Jews' archetypical antipathy against Jews" (Jockusch 2012, 197). The only way out of this vicious cycle was to pursue the Zionist dream. Sovereignty would provide Jews once and for all with the security they needed to survive and thrive.[23]

[20] Yisra'el Klausner, introducing Alex Bein, "Hartsa'ah du"ḥ 'al nesi'ati," 1957, CZA P64/20/I in Lustig (2017, 245).
[21] "Reshimah 'ara'it shel ha-ḥomer ha-te'udati she-nitḳabel me-germanyah," CZA L33/1882 in Lustig (2017, 260).
[22] "Ha-'asifah ha-kelalit ha-shenatit shel ha-ḥevrah," 2 Feb. 1950, CAHJP IHS/9 in Lustig (2017, 273).
[23] Of course, this viewpoint is not limited to the past nor to Dinur exclusively but is popular among Zionists in Israel and worldwide still today.

Dinur also believed that Jewish autonomy and self-governance was necessary to secure space and distance for the study of the Holocaust. A corollary was that he felt that European survivors could not objectively research their own past and only Israelis properly trained in historical research at Hebrew University could successfully pursue such scholarly work. Holocaust historian Laura Jockusch characterizes this skepticism among professional historians who sought to gather and work with survivors' documents but did not trust survivors' interpretations of them as a "conflict over who 'owned' the history of the Holocaust as it would be written" (198).

At Yad Vashem, the consequence of these conflicts was early bitterness and resentment between Yad Vashem's leadership and the many survivors who comprised its staff (198), not to mention the leadership of YIVO, who elevated diasporic Jews' skills and experiences as central to their mission. There was also, because of their competing visions, conflict between Yad Vashem and national institutions in Europe such as the CDJC in France. To them, the latter tended to dissimulate the genocide by folding it into national narratives of resistance, while Yad Vashem aimed to emphasize the specific brutality of Nazi violence against Jews (Wieviorka 1992). Subsequently, there was conflict between Yad Vashem with attempts by the CDJC to create a centralized Holocaust documentation and research center for all of Europe.

In fact, in addition to the major efforts of the institutions described above, after the Holocaust, numerous Jewish survivors pioneered grassroots efforts to document their experiences. They gathered testimonies, administered questionnaires, and interviewed peers about their experiences to develop a comprehensive understanding of the cataclysm they had experienced. They also collected letters, diaries, art and poetry, photographs, song lyrics, jokes, stories, and more from those who had been killed. Finally, they sought to gather all possible evidence that the Nazis had left behind of their crimes. In total, Jews in 14 European countries established "historical commissions, documentation centers, and projects for the purpose of documenting and researching" the recent catastrophe (Jockusch 2012, 4). As a result, in December 1947, a conference was held in Paris for survivors of the Holocaust from throughout Europe to convene and share their stories. The goal was to deliberate how best to preserve, write, and share the history of the horrors they had witnessed and also to coordinate their various documentation efforts.

The European Conference of Jewish Historical Commissions and Documentation Centers met for 10 days under the auspices of the CDJC with Isaac Schneerson at the helm. He opened the conference by welcoming delegates as survivors, archivists, and historians: "You were not only spectators of this terrible period: you lived it. You were not only present at the monstrous horrors committed by the Nazis, you suffered them." He then praised the 32 delegates for "assuming 'the difficult…and onerous task of unmasking and decrying…the true face of the monster of Nazism' by collecting, preserving, and organizing 'materials of truth' as a testimony to the Jewish catastrophe."[24] Most of the delegates had lost family members—parents, siblings, spouses, children—during the Holocaust. Some had participated in the resistance. All were determined to gather evidence of the atrocities they witnessed and to coordinate their efforts at documentation lest the Nazis succeed, despite their military loss, in extinguishing Jewish culture. This, of course, was the same motivation for many who did not survive the Holocaust to create records of their experiences, as with the *Oyneg Shabbes* archive described earlier. But now it was a matter of determining how to preserve the evidence that had been created. In accumulating documentation of what had happened to them and their

[24] CDJC, Les Juifs en Europe, 23 in Jockusch (2012, 3).

loved ones, Jews throughout Europe pursued what they felt was a moral imperative to record and preserve the past while simultaneously seeking justice and revenge.

The Paris conference allowed Jews from different countries—Germany, Sweden, Greece, Poland, and Algeria, to name a few—to share their wartime experiences and learn about others. Far from a clearly bounded national, ethnic, or even religious community, Jews across Europe varied in the extent to which they identified with their home country and were or were not assimilated, they practiced different cultural traditions depending on where they were located and their particular history and social affiliations, and they varied in their religious faith and secularity as well. Their Holocaust experiences were likewise remarkably diverse: In Poland, the Holocaust began as early as September 1939 with the German and Soviet invasions. By 1945, over 90% of its Jewish population had been killed, whether in ghettos, concentration and death camps, or mass shootings. In contrast, in France, only immigrant Jews were initially arrested, detained in internment camps throughout the country, and then deported east to Auschwitz, while Jewish French civilians were targeted later in the war, beginning in July 1942 with the Vel d'Hiv roundups. Although 76,000 Jews were killed, 75% of France's pre-war Jewish population survived. Hence, in addition to sharing their experiences, survivors also discussed questions that arose from their comparisons, including how much time, energy, and resources they should devote to collecting versus analyzing materials to compose a comprehensive history of the Holocaust. There was also a question of how much their efforts should focus on facilitating the prosecution of Nazis and their enablers.

Ultimately, the delegates decided to establish a committee to enable the various historical commissions and documentation centers to coordinate their work moving forward (Jockusch 2012, 180). These coordination efforts would entail, among other things, the exchange and consolidation of documents across countries in Europe. Finally, the organizers of the conference also endeavored to construct a European center in Paris that would preserve the history of European Jewry more broadly. This conflicted with the goals of YIVO and Yad Vashem, and the latter, especially, made their displeasure clear.

Prior to the start of the Paris conference, Max Weinreich, director of YIVO, told Schneerson "it would be better if the institutions involved stuck to their work for now and kept in touch with each other by correspondence before an ill-purposed conference is convened which might leave many people disappointed." Weinrich discouraged Schneerson from coordinating a conference that would bring survivors from across Europe together to share their experiences. Meanwhile, representatives of Yad Vashem and their supporters feared that the European conference would interfere with their plan to become the central institution for Holocaust research and documentation, not to mention the important role they had hoped the institute could play in legitimizing and naturalizing the state itself. In June 1947, Moshe Mark Prager, a Polish-Jewish historian responsible for bringing numerous documents from Poland to Palestine, notified the executive committee responsible for planning Yad Vashem that "if there is no immediate large-scale action from Yad Vashem, the initiative is in danger of being taken from our hands" (Greenberg 2015, 60).[25] The committee discussed boycotting the conference as a means of asserting their displeasure and lack of support for a European Jewish archive but in the end elected to determine a list of restrictions for Paris instead. The

[25] Moshe Mark Prager, "The State of Research Activity on the Destruction of Israel in Europe and the Program of Concentrating the Documentation in the General Archives of Yad Vashem (Report on My Trip and Research in Europe, January–May 1947)," June 17, 1947, VA AM1, folder 527, frame 191 in Jockusch (2012, 161–62).

restrictions included that the CDJC avoid creating a European Institution that would interfere with Yad Vashem's goals of centralizing in Palestine documentation related to the Holocaust.

Yad Vashem also organized a counter-conference in Jerusalem on Holocaust documentation after getting wind of the conference in Paris. Its lead organizer, future director of Yad Vashem, Ben-Zion Dinur, intended for the conference to lay the groundwork for the transfer of archival material from Europe to Palestine. The delegates passed a resolution declaring Israel "the most appropriate site for Holocaust commemoration" and asked all the documentation centers in Europe to begin transferring their holdings to Jerusalem (Jockusch 2012, 162). The CDJC was in attendance at this conference and, although it agreed to support the Zionist project, it refused to transfer their original holdings. To them, the Holocaust was a Jewish European trauma; why shouldn't its archives remain in Europe? A transnational vision inspired the conference in Paris, while the Zionist ambitions of Yad Vashem were explicitly nationalist and thus diametrically opposed.

In the end, on the eve of the Paris conference, the formal establishment of the State of Israel was declared, sparking a Zionist fervor among delegates along with renewed hope for those who believed that all Holocaust documentation should be stored in Jerusalem. Yad Vashem also sent a telegram reminding Paris conference participants of "a project concerned with the establishment in Palestine of a worldwide Jewish Central Foundation, Yad Vashem, which is now being planned. Nothing should be done to detract from this centralized Jewish effort."[26] The establishment of the State of Israel the night before the conference thus strengthened the position of Yad Vashem via the CDJC and, ultimately, no permanent institution in Paris was ever created.

Salvaged Documents and the Dilemma of Classification

One dilemma brought forth by different Jewish institutions' efforts to collect and document the past was how to classify what, exactly, it was that had happened. The terms "genocide" and "Holocaust" did not yet exist in the public lexicon. Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphaël Lemkin famously invented the word "genocide" in 1944, and it was used for the first time during the Nuremberg Trials, from 1946 to 1949. Meanwhile, the Nazi phrase of a "final solution" was common in France in the 1940s (*"la solution finale"*) and other terms such as "the extermination," "the deportation," and "the persecution" were commonly used then as well. Others, such as Shoah, cataclysm, and the Yiddish word *churban,* originally used to describe the destruction of the Temple but appropriated to describe the destruction of European Jewry, were also deployed but with much less frequency. Only in the 1970s did the term "Holocaust" achieve dominance in public discussion and academic research (Heuman 2015, 157). This early difficulty in not knowing how to label the horrors that the Nazis and their accomplices perpetrated testifies to the rawness of what was then a very recent violent past. Hence, as each institution sought to consolidate evidence that could tell its story, and the story of Europe's Jews more broadly, they simultaneously sought to shape the meaning of this past for the future.

In France, the post-war Gaullist narrative of collective resistance and martyrdom in the face of occupation led to challenges for the diverse Jewish activists involved in the construction of the CDJC. The Gaullist narrative treated the Vichy regime as an aberration; a blip in historical time that was not part of true French history. Charles de Gaulle made this clear when he

[26] Heuman 2015, 23.

refused to proclaim the existence of a new republic after the fall of Vichy. Instead, on August 25, 1944, he declared, "The Republic has never ceased to exist…. Vichy was always and remains null and void." From De Gaulle's perspective, the true France was involved in the resistance all along. Those who disappeared and never returned were French martyrs, and questions of collaboration and perpetration were entirely suppressed. This "Vichy Syndrome"—what French historian Henry Rousso (1991) famously characterized as the tendency after the war in France to ignore the uglier aspects of occupation, including the perpetration of violence, collaboration, and *attentisme* of French civilians—made it difficult for Jews to frame their experiences in anything other than the same heroically resistant terms.

Simultaneously, the French state's return to republicanism also created challenges for Jews in France who sought to establish institutions dedicated to the past. With the republic restored, social categories such as race, ethnicity, or religion were publicly shunned in favor of French nationalism. Jewishness returned to its pre-war, post-revolutionary status as a private affair. Thus, to secure the elimination of racial classification from the polity, in August 1944, the provisional government issued two circulars repealing all existing racial legislation promulgated by the Vichy regime and insisted on the destruction of any records that could identify citizens by their race.

Similarly, in December 1946, Minister of the Interior Edouard Depreux ordered France's departmental prefects to "destroy all wartime dossiers and records in which the category 'Jew' had been used as a basis for discrimination" (Steinlight 2017, 311). This documentary purge, perhaps noble insofar as it comprised an effort by France to return to republican conceptions of all citizens as equal under the law, simultaneously interfered with Jews' abilities to publicly proclaim the distinctiveness of their wartime experiences (Poznanski 1999, 62). It also made it difficult for them to seek restitution for their material and cultural property, since without evidence of the racial legislation that called for the spoliation of Jews during the war, it was impossible to secure their return.

Consequently, the Gaullist narrative of resistance and martyrdom and France's post-war embrace of republicanism influenced how Jews themselves made sense of the past, at least publicly. For example, in fall 1945, an event organized by Jewish groups titled "The Week of the Martyred Jewish Child" was objected to by Jewish communists who insisted on not separating Jewish from non-Jewish Frenchmen by treating their remembrance practices as distinct from those of the rest of France. Zosa Szajkowski, one of YIVO's most prolific *zamlers* described in more detail below, remarked in a letter full of sarcasm to Riva Tcherikower, the first YIVO Archivist of the Central Jewish Library and Archives in New York, "They want this commemoration to be carried out in conjunction with one for all French children, as if there were a lot of French children killed by the Germans."[27] In another letter, Szajkowski described with outrage how Jews in France were being encouraged by their Jewish community and political leaders to "assimilate" and "stop grouping themselves in segregated Jewish groups."[28] In the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust in France, universal interpretations of Nazi crimes were encouraged while French complicity in the Holocaust was marginalized, treated as an aberration, and Jews either desired or encouraged others to reintegrate themselves into the nation according to the Gaullist and republican narrative.

[27] Szajkowski to R. Tcherikower, September 30, 1945, in YIVO RG 81, folio 152,129, in Leff (2015, 99).
[28] Szajkowski to R. Tcherikower, France, February 29, 1945 [sic], in YIVO RG 81, folio 151,836; and July 6, 1945, in YIVO RG 81, folio 152,006, ibid.

Following this, in its efforts to re-establish the French Jewish community as properly French and Jewish through its work, the CDJC frequently situated Jews' suffering during the Holocaust into this larger French narrative as well. This meant publishing monographs highlighting evidence of Jews' contributions to the resistance, including the sole publication about Auschwitz throughout the 1940s, which focused only on the resistance of its prisoners. Although the vast majority of French Jews who were killed by Nazis died at Auschwitz, the publication spoke nothing of the starvation, slave labor, executions, or gas chambers, let alone French complicity in sending Jews to their deaths. Another publication produced by the CDJC detailed the extensive French Concentration Camp system and was titled "The Anti-France," Vichy's term for Jews, communists, and freemasons, now reversed to describe the Vichy regime as the true deviant.

Finally, in 1950, the CDJC even went so far as to discuss changing its name to remove the word *Juive* from its title and to dedicate its center to the study of totalitarianism and authoritarianism instead.[29] The discussion was in response to the Cold War shift in the West towards viewing Nazism, along with communism, as a type of totalitarianism, coupled with the goal of making the past more aligned with contemporary French political interests. With this change, the genocide against Jews would simply comprise one part of a greater research agenda on extremist politics. Though the proposal was ultimately rejected, the fact that it was even considered demonstrates how the CDJC struggled to negotiate French norms and conventions in the after-war period, simultaneously organizing itself to support Jews' distinct needs and assimilating itself into the larger French social and political context. The challenge of rebuilding the material culture of Jewish life in France while striving to de-emphasize Jewish uniqueness loomed large over the CDJC's efforts.

Of course, nowhere was this more apparent than with the CDJC's major goal of securing Jewish restitution after the Holocaust. The CDJC's primary aim, as described earlier, was to collect, preserve, and present documentary evidence that would help Jews reclaim their stolen property. Leff (2015, 96) explains how "returning Jews found themselves bereft of property of all sorts, from high-value items like works of art, book collections, and furniture to smaller items like clothing, linens, tools, and pots and pans." Yet France's republican commitments after the war required the destruction of any documents that could help Jews make material claims. Leff explains further: "re-establishing republicanism [got in] the way of Jewish reconstruction…making it difficult for Jews to document their suffering under the previous regime" (106). Only in December 1947 did the minister of the interior amend its previous requirement to destroy all legislation pertaining to Jews' racial classification to "spare documents that might help people reclaim legal ownership of homes, businesses, and material possessions" (Steinlight 2017, 313). Even so, the CDJC was continuously confronted with the challenge of how to restore Jewish property when the racial classification system central to its plunder was erased. Its goal of representing the particularities of the Jewish experience in France clashed with its goal of integrating Holocaust history into French history. This led to conflict not only within the organization itself but also with those two other organizations that sought to preserve evidence of the Holocaust with different aims.

YIVO, as explained earlier, was animated by an explicitly diaspora nationalist vision of Judaism with Yiddish language and culture at its core. Its leaders' conception of Jewish life and culture was inspired by Simon Dubnow, a Russian Jewish historian active in pioneering

[29] 'Procés-verbal de la r.union du comit. Directeur du CDJC', 8 November 1950, CDJC, MDXXXVI, boite 2, p. 2 in Heuman (2015, 92).

modern Jewish education, Jewish resistance to pogroms, and the Jewish Historical-Ethnographic society. Dubnow authored numerous publications, including the ten-volume *World History of the Jewish People*, and repeatedly called on Jews throughout Eastern Europe to preserve their historical material, which he believed was crucial to protecting Judaism by creating a strong Jewish culture in the present.[30] Dubbed YIVO's "intellectual godfather," YIVO's founders "venerated Dubnow as the creator of a historical scholarship which placed the history and culture of Diaspora Jewry at its center" (Jockusch 2012, 72). Drawing on Dubnow's commitment to a Jewish history that prioritized and elevated the Yiddish-speaking diaspora, YIVO's structure was animated by a belief that Jews were a national group with their own culture and that culture revolved around the Yiddish language and Jewish life across Eastern Europe.[31]

Subsequently, when YIVO was first established in Vilna and Berlin in August 1925, several projects that centered *Yiddishkeit* were formed, including the creation of a historical section that was tasked with the construction of an archive dedicated to Yiddish culture. Four years later, the institution underwent a restructuring led by sociologist and research director Max Weinreich. Although this new setup prioritized research on Yiddish cultural, socioeconomic, and political life over collecting, within a decade, everything would change. At the start of the Holocaust, Weinreich immigrated to New York, YIVO in Manhattan became its New Headquarters, and the archives took on a new significance. No longer did YIVO prioritize research, training, and analysis; rather, documenting Europe's Jewish communities under attack was most important: "Send us everything published in your locality—pamphlets, leaflets, materials on community affairs and of local organizations. Send us all documents and papers you have of former times from both this country and overseas," the New York branch wrote to its members in September 1943.[32] YIVO's effort to centralize Europe's Jewish archives in New York was animated by a vision of keeping Yiddish culture alive after the Holocaust.

This continuity in mission, from Vilna to Manhattan, was remarkably matched by a continuance in leadership, as all of YIVO's original founders, along with Max Weinreich, were able to safely migrate to the United States. Among them was Elias (Ilya) Tcherikower, director of YIVO's historical section in Berlin from 1925 to 1933, then Paris from 1933 to 1940, and his wife, Rebecca (Riva), who was YIVO's first archivist in New York (Leff 2012, 27). Together, they regularly hosted a group of Yiddish-speaking scholars in their Paris apartment before making their way to America in September 1940. One of these scholars, though not formally trained, was Zosa Szajkowski, mentioned earlier. Szajkowski was a Polish immigrant to Paris and collected Jewish archival documentation in France as a *zamler* for YIVO until September 1941 when he, too, immigrated to New York.

Then, in June 1944, Szajkowski returned to France and would subsequently make repeat trips throughout the rest of his life to gather the traces of French Jewish history for YIVO and other Jewish institutions in the United States and Israel, including items survivors had rescued from ghettos and camps during the Holocaust (Leff 2015, 1). Since Szajkowski infrequently had permission from France's archives to bring or sell their documents in the United States, he

[30] https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/YIVO

[31] Simon Dubnow was rounded up and ghettoized in Riga, Latvia by the Nazis in July 1941. Survivors recall that Dubnow encouraged Jews in the Riga Ghetto to create records of the atrocities perpetrated against them by Nazis, regularly proclaiming to them in Yiddish, *"Yidn, shraybt un farshraybt!"* ("Jews, write and record!"). Dubnow was murdered by Nazis in December 1941.

[32] Yedies fun YIVO, Sept. 1943, in Lustig (2017, 216).

would often steal them and rationalize his thefts as justifiable due to what he felt was French Jews' poor recognition of themselves as Jewish first and French second.[33] Hence, Szajkowski was inspired to rescue Jewish culture and incensed by what he felt was a belief among French Jews that local politics, not Jewish nationalism, could solve their problems. He rarely had permission from French archivists to transfer the materials out of Europe, but he was convinced that YIVO, as well as, eventually, other Jewish institutions throughout the United States and Israel, was their proper home. "Szajkowski… had no concept of a particular *French* Jewish patrimony," writes French historian Lisa Leff. "Rather, [he believed] these materials could be gathered up and taken anywhere that Jews lived" (2015, 70). For Szajkowski, for the Tcherikowers, for all of YIVO now headquartered in New York after the Holocaust, that place, of course, was YIVO.

Yad Vashem, much like YIVO, opposed the imposed category blindness of French republicanism. To the Zionists who sought to establish a Jewish nationalist institution, it was essential to recognize the distinctiveness of the Jewish experience. A Jewish state was necessary for Jewish survival, and a Jewish archive and research center dedicated to the Holocaust was necessary to help justify it. The Holocaust conference in Jerusalem described earlier thus explicitly intended to establish links between Holocaust research and Jewish history as a national history. Jewish identity as a public matter and the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a catastrophe that targeted Jews was emphasized rather than minimized. This was a radically different approach from the CDJC's intentions in France.

Consequently, the Zionists hoped that the General Archives and Yad Vashem would complement their national aspirations. Rather than simply document the constriction of a Jewish state, their archives would help to construct it. Alex Bein, discussed earlier, described this project as an "ingathering of the exiles" of Jewish archives, mirroring the language of mass and unrestricted immigration for Jews to Israel that was codified into its Declaration of Independence. In fact, the Law of Return, which gives Jews worldwide the right to immigrate to Israel and claim citizenship, was also originally called the Law of the Ingathering of the Exiles (Lustig 2017, 254–255). In using the same language to portray their archival ambitions, Bein and the leaders of the General Archives sought to symbolically represent the centralizing of Jewish documents from throughout the diaspora as akin to the centralizing of Jewish people themselves. The archive would frame Jewish history as one, over and above the diverse histories of Jews in the communities where they were from. In other words, the archives of Jews would become a Jewish archive in the service of the Zionist project.

Hence, in classifying their efforts as geared toward constructing Israel as the center of the Jewish world, the Zionists also classified their archives as natural heirs to the rich heritage of European Jewry. In this sense, they also framed their projects as a monument to Europe's dead, infusing their archival ambitions with a moral symbolism in addition to a national one. In December 1949, Bein explained to the staff of the Zionist Archives that "the ingathering of the exiles… needs to be not only about bringing people [to Israel] but also about saving the remnants of their past."[34] In making such statements, Bein indirectly declared the future of European Jewry dead—even as Europe's Jewish survivors strived to pursue their own projects that would salvage their remains. Lustig (2017, 287) explains, "the Jewish Historical General

[33] A full recounting of Szajkowski's undertakings in France and elsewhere is beyond the scope of this paper, and his story is more complicated than this brief summary can attest. Jewish historian Lisa Leff's (2015) excellent *The Archive Thief* tells the full story of his exploits.

[34] Bein, "Din ve-ḥeshbon mi-nesi'ati le-'eropah," 19 Dec. 1949, L33/1439 in Lustig (2017, 252)

Archives' efforts depended on the determination that destroyed communities [in Europe] lacked successors." These archives would memorialize Holocaust victims while marking Israel as the successor to Europe's Jewish communities.

Discussion

The recent rise in social scientific research that uses conflict archives has resulted in an effort to examine the promises and pitfalls of working with such data. These projects have called for increased attention to issues of reliability and validity, missing evidence, records destroyed or hidden, and other possible limitations that might influence authors' results. This article extends this work by drawing attention to the importance of including civilians' voices in archival research on conflict while simultaneously revealing the high stakes involved in constructing these archives—victims' archives in particular. It demonstrates, through analysis of contention between three conflict archives after the Holocaust, how questions about the social and political construction of archives are also questions of social and political classification. In the aftermath of war and violence, victimized populations can have competing goals based on diverse pre-war and wartime experiences, not to mention different visions of the kind of world they hope to create. Hence, debates over possession and classification are also debates of remembrance and belonging—how to repair a broken world, and how the world to come should be.[35]

Following the Holocaust in France, the CDJC endeavored to create a French Jewish archive that could help Jews reintegrate into France materially by collecting documents that would allow them to secure the restitution of their property. It also aimed to help Jews reintegrate symbolically by procuring evidence and producing materials that portrayed Jews as active in the resistance, despite their victimization, during the war. Furthermore, the CDJC was involved in the Europeanization of the Holocaust—in classifying the Holocaust not solely as a part of the French wartime experience but also in its failed attempt to construct a transnational European archive with the Holocaust centered as a specifically European trauma.

In contrast, the YIVO archives in New York sought to consolidate the Yiddish diaspora experience by collecting documents from Holocaust survivors in Europe, furthering the work it had begun in Vilnius and elsewhere before the war but with a new perspective that the future of European Jewish life resided in America and thus so should its documents.

Finally, the Jewish Historical General Archives along with Yad Vashem endeavored to gather together in Jerusalem Europe's Jewish archives in order to bolster its larger Zionist project. Their intention was to construct a new vision of Jewish history with the state of Israel at its center, and they relied on the transfer of documents from Europe to Palestine to make this vision a reality.

Subsequently, each institution analyzed in this paper recognized that its ability to possess documents from the past could shape the memory of the Holocaust moving forward. Given that Europe's Jews had no nation of their own and that the creation of the state of Israel was not a universally agreed-upon solution to the trauma of the Holocaust, the question of archival

[35] Like the article's title, this phrasing is a play on the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam* as well as the concept of עוֹלָם הַבָּא (*olam ha-ba*). While *tikkun olam* refers to the responsibility for Jewish people to act to repair the world. In Jewish theology, Olam Ha-ba refers to the world after death. For many Jews, the Olam Ha-ba also refers to the era of the Messiah.

property was, each archive recognized, not simply a matter of collecting the past but a matter of shaping the future. The result were intense and often acrimonious debates among key actors in the three institutions and a scattering of documentation across the archives.

In the years since the time-period analyzed, YIVO and Yad Vashem have coordinated their efforts, along with the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, DC, which was founded in 1980. In 1966, YIVO and Yad Vashem worked together to produce 13 volumes of Holocaust bibliographies, which remain widely used in academic research to this day. French sources are listed separately in bibliographies published by the CDJC. The CDJC has become a fixture of the French Jewish institutional landscape—an archive, research center, and exhibition space in the heart of Paris, which now also has a memorial museum as its counterpart.

In 1953, the CDJC and Yad Vashem determined an agreement dividing the labor of their responsibilities. The CDJC still maintains many of its original holdings, but it has exchanged copies of its documents along with Yad Vashem and the USHMM. Many have been placed online as well. This makes it possible for scholars of the Holocaust in France, and, for that matter, many other countries in Europe, to conduct research on the Holocaust without ever stepping foot in the countries where it took place. While there are advantages to such accessibility—not least, the democratization of access—this raises new questions as well.

In particular, it is unclear how the newly created online infrastructures relate to these previous battles and their outcomes, or how present biases have informed selections of what to digitize first. Merely a cursory look reveals, however, that the digitization has been uneven. The majority of documents available on the CDJC's website, for example, pertain to the *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives*, which was responsible for organizing and implementing anti-Semitic legislation in France during the Holocaust (7099 out of over 200,000 documents online total). In person, the bulk of its available information comprises the archives of the Gestapo in occupied France, which is, in fact, a German source. Meanwhile, Yad Vashem contains documentation from Jews all over the world on-site, including its vast cache of over 131,000 survivor testimonies. From this selection, only 200 are available online, most of which (189) are in Hebrew. To understand the history of the Holocaust by doing research online would prove limiting to the potential of this important work, while research in either setting alone would produce a biased interpretation at best. More work is needed before online archival research reaches its democratizing potential.

As a result, and beyond the particulars of the conflicts analyzed here, the results of this study suggest important lessons for the practice of historical research and theorizing with archival documents more broadly.

First, while archival research relies to a certain degree on "puzzle-piecing"—combining historical documents with one another to construct a narrative about the past—such work involves more than simply fitting documents together. It requires historicizing archives to know which documents are available and why. Some may have been destroyed contemporaneously, others may not yet be declassified, and others may simply not have been catalogued because they were recently received or not a priority of the institution. Without historicizing the archive, a scholar might not know what they are missing and believe that what has been provided is telling the full available story. "Archives," Trouillot writes, "help select the stories that matter" (1995:52). They are sites of inclusion and exclusion that elevate some voices and versions of history implicitly in the documents that are readily available, while others are excluded from view. Yet by examining an archive that purports to tell a particular history in comparison with others containing documents about the same past, not only does a more

complete picture emerge but narratives about that past and what shaped its present form are revealed in the process. The fact of conflicting archives—separate institutions that prioritize different features of a common past—illuminates the importance of historicizing archives by calling attention to how different institutions impart narratives about what matters.

Second, archives must be historicized lest social scientists reproduce past politics unknowingly in their research. Archives reflect contemporary political issues that concerned their founders. They are not neutral nor transparent sites of historical record. As a result, what researchers are provided when they engage in archival research and how it comes to them in form has been developed to serve specific needs that, without historicizing archives, can remain hidden from view. These needs—the political projects that shape the construction and organization of archives—may implicitly impart narratives about the past in how documents have been arranged and described and how those descriptions provide points of access to materials, centralizing and guiding their use in turn. Subsequently, as social scientists collect documents to answer questions about the past, they would be wise to attend to how the documents themselves have been assembled and organized. Our analyses must distinguish between what happened and how what happened has been preserved and presented. The latter inevitably bears on our work but is frequently unattended to in historical social science. The case of conflict archives examined here thus reveals how archives do not simply reflect the past but bring new modes of perceiving it into being.

Third, archival research often relies to a certain degree on serendipity—the surprising discovery of unexpected sources that change the nature of a research project.[36] But, inevitably, serendipity is harder to come by when researchers are blind to the logics of categorization and classification that organize their archives and the documents they wish to work with. In the same way that knowledge of an archives' construction increases awareness of what is available and why, knowledge of an archive's construction can increase awareness of what might be available but intentionally excluded or available but located elsewhere. Hence, knowledge of what motivated the construction of an archive and its sorting and selecting of documents provides scholars with the opportunity to use archival gaps or silences as clues for where to look. Similarly, the silences can provide information in and of themselves about whose perspectives were considered valuable enough to be preserved and indexed while others were never collected, neglected, or possibly even destroyed. Without this background knowledge, however, a scholar might miss seeing the gaps or silences altogether. Serendipity is thus perhaps better understood as what happens when preparation meets opportunity.[37] Historicizing the construction of an archive in relation to similar and possibly conflicting archives can increase one's chances of making an unexpected discovery or, at the very least, question why some perspectives are "unavailable" to be discovered in material form.

Fourth and finally, the debates analyzed here reveal how archives themselves are sites of knowledge whose history can bear on questions of interest to sociologists. Particularly in the case of victims' conflict archives, sociologists may wish to problematize the standard focus on

[36] Indeed, sometimes a serendipitous finding can change the subject of a research project altogether. Shai Dromi (2020) provides a brief summary of this in a recent essay where he describes how private documents that he found at the International Committee of the Red Cross archives in Geneva, which were distinct from what he originally looked for, eventually became the basis for his book *Above the Fray: The Red Cross and the Making of the Humanitarian NGO Sector*.

[37] The full quote, which is most commonly attributed to the Roman philosopher Seneca, is "luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."

dominant versus marginalized voices to examine how, even within marginalized communities, multiple perspectives exist on what forms of knowledge matter, whose voices ought to be elevated or suppressed, and the purpose of sharing evidence of violence in the first place. Archivists in recent years have argued for a "community-centric approach" to data collection "to better meet the ongoing needs of survivors of human rights abuse and victims' family members" (Caswell 2014, 210). However, this study demonstrates how survivors do not always have the same goals nor even the same understandings of who their community comprises. They are not a homogenous group but rather have different positionalities based on distinct experiences and life histories that have led them to imagine different ways of preserving the past. Hence, what shapes debates over archival construction, how such debates get resolved, and how their outcomes guide research in the present are all questions worthy of historical sociologists' time and attention, especially those who study violence. Victims may comment on their experiences with violence intentionally or unintentionally through the artifacts they leave behind, but their voices manifest differently in archives in part due to how the archives that speak in their name come into being.

Conclusion

> *"Collecting is a weapon of the weak, a scavenging project that ultimately aims to reassemble both a broken world and a broken self."*
> - Lisa Leff, "The Archive Thief" (2015, 14)

The Holocaust was a cataclysmic event that forever altered Jewish history and forced Jewish community leaders to rethink their national identity and belonging. Six million Jews were murdered, hundreds of thousands fled Europe as refugees, millions of cultural treasures were stolen by the Nazis, and Jewish institutions, if not destroyed, were left in utter disarray. The remnants of European Jewish history were heirless, ushering in a "feverish era of collecting—and conflict" among those who sought to gather them (Lustig 2017, 1). For hundreds of years, Jewish life had been characterized by tremendous cultural diversity across and within national borders. Suddenly, there was an opportunity to frame Jewish life anew, and competition over the possession and significance of Europe's Jewish archives became central to debates over the future of Judaism itself.

Yet the debates analyzed in this article speak to the challenges of working with victims' conflict archives more broadly. Much like the scores of innocent civilians caught in the crosshairs of a violent conflict, archives are often displaced as a result of war. Where their documents end up can shape interpretations of history, not simply reveal it, unfiltered, as it occurred. Debates over the past reflect on the structure and content of records, resulting in an intertwining of material and symbolic struggles in the archives themselves. But without historicizing this past and how it bears on logics of selection, collection, and classification of each archive, scholars risk telling half-stories and biased accounts of the full complexities of their victims' experiences. Generalizing from this example, this article thus argues that the process of creating, preserving, archiving, and accessing evidence on violence should be central to methodological discussions rather than ignored, and issues of potential bias should be emphasized rather than elided. We must know what was lost in order to repair what was broken.

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