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The Embroidered Tablecloth: How Locale Influences Eastern European Jewish Textile Production

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Abstract

Recent scholarship frames craft as distinct from art and as an encapsulation of cultural expression at a given moment. Building on that framework, this thesis analyzes the shifting attitudes towards the production of handmade textiles among Eastern European Jews in the US in the twentieth century, as influenced by their migration. To demonstrate the textile environment at that time, this thesis examines pre- and post-migration primary sources and autobiographical writing, including Mary Antin's *The Promised Land*, supplemented with interviews of first- and second-generation immigrants to Chicago. In contrast with stereotypes about craft as historically stable, defining craft as regional also reveals change over time. The study further finds that some forms of handmade objects, namely lace, to transcend the scholarly craft/art distinction. Lastly, this research demonstrates how textiles carry memory, as historical records, and how they transmit experience past their moment and locale of origin unto new places and times.

Keywords

Craft, Textiles, Memory, Jewish, Eastern European, Immigration.

Summary for Lay Audience

The Embroidered Tablecloth is a study about craft. It views craft as a broad category consisting of many different techniques and styles. Historically, understandings of textile work minimized the creativity and artistry involved in the creation of textiles and gave the appearance that craft was unchanging throughout history. The research in this thesis instead presents craft as specific to geographic region, culture, and time by studying the context of textile craft production within the Eastern European Jewish community of immigrants to the US at the turn of the 20th century.

This thesis looks at two types of sources: primary written sources during the period of the Great Jewish Migration to the US, occurring between the years of 1882 and 1924, and qualitative interviews of descendants of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. The primary sources, which include an autobiography, an unpublished journal, two periodicals, and a craft fair, offer insight into which kinds of techniques and to what extent each was used. Subsequently, twelve women were interviewed about the craft knowledge of their immigrant ancestor(s) and direct descendants, including their own experiences with craft. Each heirloom mentioned in these interviews has been recorded and analyzed both individually and in aggregate.

Observations from this research were several. First, the presence of a needs-based hierarchy of techniques during the era of the Great Jewish Migration extending to 1950 was made clear. This hierarchy included firstly sewn, embroidered, and knitted items as ubiquitous among makers. Sewing and knitting were used for practical purposes based on necessity, often when machine-made items were unavailable. Embroidery's prevalence as a decorative element was due to its natural extension from sewing. Secondly, white lace was created for beautification of the home, using drawn and cut work, crochet, bobbin lace, and others. After a short transition phase, craft work in the 1960s onward functioned from a desire-based model. Crocheting and knitting were paired together, sewing became on of several options, rather than pervasive, and almost all projects were done out of choice. This thesis

also understands textiles to carry memory and thus can act as a historical record of family history.

Dedication

For my grandmother,
Sylvia Gilbert.

Your memory lives on through the textiles you left behind
and my studies.

1939 – 2020
z"l

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Introduction

Figure 1: Dora Stone's Embroidered Tablecloth used as the chuppah in her great-granddaughter's wedding in 2012. Tablecloth was completed in the 1970s. Courtesy of the Stone Family and photographer Dave Witting.

This thesis explores the intersection of craft and culture. The research presented here uses Glenn Adamson's theory of craft, which states as one of its tenets that craft is an inherently cultural endeavor and cannot be separated from the context in which it was produced.[1] Taken as a fundamental backdrop, this work carefully recounts the specific techniques used by highly skilled Eastern European Jewish crafters at the time of their immigration to the city of Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century, and how the style and usage of those techniques changed over time and across one to two generations.

[1] Glenn Adamson, *Thinking through Craft* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 75.

Craft has historically been defined as simply a lesser version of art; a type of production utterly tangential to self-expression. Craft theory, however, identifies craft as a discipline with unique features that sits parallel, not subservient, to contemporary conceptions of art.[2] It is from this position that I center my research. According to Adamson and other scholars of craft work, one of the features of craft that makes it distinct is the skill involved in its creation.[3] Through the use of twelve qualitative interviews with descendants of Eastern European Jews who immigrated during the Great Jewish Migration between 1882 and 1924, I analyze tens of handmade textiles remaining within the families of their makers. These textiles demonstrate the high level of skill achieved by many crafters, born both in Eastern Europe and Chicago. Some makers used their craft professionally, and some created purely for personal interest; the difference in quality between the two is present but minimal. Skill greatly increased the value of the items, which in turn influenced the memory of those items and their preservation. Primarily, this thesis is about the historical record of Eastern European textile production in the last century; secondarily, it acts as an homage to the skilled work of Eastern European Jewish ancestors that is often dismissed as historically irrelevant.

The interviewees submitted a number of handmade tablecloths, which became the referent for the title. The difference in the types of tablecloths produced over time provides a reference point for how the textile crafts mentioned by the interviewees changed over the same time period. In the first half of the century, the tablecloths mentioned included an embroidered tablecloth made for playing bridge. It hosted multicolored cross stitch, drawn work lace distinctive of the era, and a quilted outer edge of white thread on the cloth's white background. This piece has the greatest range of

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[2] Ibid, 2-4.

[3] Ibid, 3; M. H. G. Kuijpers, An Archaeology of Skill: Metalworking Skill and Material Specialization in Early Bronze Age Central Europe, Routledge Studies in Archaeology 29 (Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 4-5; Clare M. Wilkinson-Weber and Alicia Ory DeNicola, eds., Critical Craft: Technology, Globalization, and Capitalism (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016), 5.

techniques of any piece submitted, and the combination of drawn work, not seen after 1950, and colored cross stitch acts to both cement it within its original era and connect it to future tablecloths. Other pieces dating prior to 1950 include a white popcorn bedspread, named so for its abundant use of the popcorn stitch and included in this category because of its similar size and function to decorative tablecloths, and a white crocheted lace tablecloth made of repeating squares. Like the bridge tablecloth, the white lace of the latter fixes it to the first half of the century, and the squares hint at the upcoming afghan trend of the 1960s.

In the 1970s, several embroidered tablecloths appear, created by the same designer. One tablecloth makes use of sizeable roses and surrounding vines, peppered throughout with small cutwork openings, done entirely in bold gray thread. Two others made around the same time were passed down among the family and eventually used as cloth for the chuppah, in two separate weddings, one of which is pictured at the beginning of this introduction. The usage of handmade cloth of a great-grandmother by her great-granddaughter speaks to the deep meaning carried within these textiles. Several other tablecloths were made in the 1980s from cross stitch kits; these are simpler in design and transfer the labor for the designs from the maker to machines, which pre-printed X's in washable ink onto the fabric. The tablecloths continue to unite the families who use them, however, due to their explicitly Jewish themes which insured their frequent use at holiday dinners and gave cause for a grandmother and granddaughter to craft together. The temporary unification of textiles and the overt expression of Jewish identity, as well as the increase of machine involvement within craft production, highlight a social context reminiscent of an earlier era with significant changes reflective of both the social and material reality of the time.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an outline of the theory informing the research herein. In addition to Glenn Adamson, Mikail H. G. Kujipers provides insight into the nature and relevance of skill. Clare M. Wilkenson-Weber and Alicia Ory DeNicola offer a theoretical justification for the continued relevance of craft in

late stage capitalism, as well as its direct relation to localized cultural context. Carole Hunt presents textiles as objects imprinted by their makers and holders of both individual and collective memory. Rozsika Parker analyzes embroidery as it relates to the art/craft divide and feminist theory. The rest of the chapter provides the background for the social context of immigration in the United States between 1882 and 1924, both broadly and for Eastern European Jews. The Jewish community writ large was deeply concerned with "Americanization," so much so that the concern often drove community behavior. The modern version of the term, assimilation, is controversial within academic circles, as it is difficult to define. I explain why I focus on the concept in this section and outline the relevance of Milton Yinger's theory of assimilation, which understands the process not as linear but as ongoing and of a cyclical nature. This section then looks at the *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition and Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* as examples of how assimilation and craft intersected within the American Jewish community at the time.

The second chapter provides an analysis of various primary sources and their mentions of craft between 1882 and 1924. Some of these sources are accounts of experiences in other cities, like Boston or Cincinnati, which had enough high numbers of Eastern European Jewish immigrants to serve as comparable to a Chicago experience. Central to this work is Mary Antin's *The Promised Land,* an autobiography published in 1913 of Antin's journey from The Pale of Settlement to Boston. Antin's story is one of both immigration and of handcraft, and the analysis centers on the intersection presented in the narrative. This is followed by an analysis of the unpublished journal of Jeanette Fishelov, who arrived in Chicago from The Pale of Settlement in 1914. While Antin's autobiography is reconstructed from memories, Fishelov's journal was written in real time as a 13- and 14-year-old, in two volumes; the first, in 1913, in the year before migration, and the second, in 1914, in the year following her immigration. The piece lightly brushes over some textiles in Fishelov's environment and otherwise offers rich insight into the intense pressures of arriving in the US as a Jewish girl from The Pale. To support the textile references in both narratives, I then provide a look into the skill

sharing present in some contemporary ladies' journals, both in English and Yiddish. The chapter concludes with a detailed analysis of the items listed by country of origin in a pamphlet from the *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition of 1913, which showcased handmade items from Jewish immigrants in Cincinnati. The list is compared to the items noted in Antin and Fishelov's narratives as well as those of contemporary journals.

The third and final chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the twelve aforementioned interviews of descendants of Eastern European immigrants whose family came to live in Chicago. Chicago was chosen as a singular city of interest to show the regional nature of crafting. However, in the primary sources I reviewed, Chicago's patterns of immigrant life and crafting were often connected to larger trends, often blurring the lines between separate cities, such as Boston, Chicago, and New York. Accordingly, in this stage of the research, I use Chicago as one example of US craft, hoping to further explore regional differences in future work. In describing the craft environment of their own lives and that of their mothers, fathers, grandfathers, and grandmothers, the interviewees showed a strong memory for a great number of handmade items extending back to the generation of immigration. I recorded each item they mentioned, along with the country of origin of the maker and the year in which it was made. The handcrafted items described in the interviews showed consistency with the style of the decade in which they were made, largely unrelated to which kinds of craft knowledge one's ancestors held. Therefore, this chapter is organized with a focus on individual items by decade. The stories of the makers are embedded within, as are the ways in which each crafter learned their skills. The result is a picture of a century's worth of textiles, as well as a clear outline of how crafters obtained their knowledge.

American Jews often place great importance on the details and meanings of a plethora of Jewish texts. This thesis will hopefully offer an additional historical record to add to the repertoire: that of the handmade textile.

Chapter 1

1 Craft and Assimilation Theories

The research I present in this thesis aims to understand craft as multifaceted, subject to change over time, and, in the specific case of diasporic Ashkenazi Jews, representative of *local* material culture. "Local" is used here to reference regional cultural boundaries, which sometimes but do not always correspond to nationally defined borders, such as The Pale of Settlement [the Western region of the Russian Empire] or the Midwestern United States. In order to understand how craft, handmade and store-bought textiles and clothing, migration, and assimilation intersect, in this chapter I draw on two separate fields of research: craft theory and assimilation theory. In the first, I refer to the work of several theorists who argue for the separation of craft from art, highlight the importance of both skill and material engagement to understandings of craft work, and point to the relevance craft maintains under late-stage capitalism. In the second, I focus on a single theorist's broad understanding of assimilation as non-linear and ongoing. Bringing the two together allows me to construct an understanding of craft and textiles that is inseparable from the culture producing the work and the historical context in which objects are made.

With the understanding that craft is culturally representative, a look into Ashkenazi craft requires a look into Ashkenazi culture. In Eastern Europe, Jewish residents were always relegated to secondary status, with their identities as Jewish people wholly intertwined with their legal categorization as such. Immigration to the US for Ashkenazi Jews coincided with a new, highly prized legal status of full citizenship and the unforeseen consequence that their Jewish identity morphed from a legal designation into the social category of race. Faced with Christian proselytization, many Ashkenazi Americans quickly developed an enormous fear of becoming "assimilated," which in turn drove much of the community's behavior for the next century, even as they endeavored to mimic American

culture in order to successfully blend in.[4] My research into the changes of Ashkenazi craft subsequently began with the question of to what extent the forces of assimilation, as the community defined it, contributed to those changes and how much was simply due to cultural change over time. As the research unfolded, it became clear that craft knowledge was tied more to geographic location than inherited knowledge, which in turn altered the initial understanding of assimilation. I present in this thesis an understanding of textiles as representative of regional skill sharing, which changes based on where its makers live at a given time and is largely not passed down through cultural heritage. At the same time, textiles serve as material memory and their creation is often a site of bonding between family members, creating a non-traditional historical record equivalent to a family tree.

1.1 Craft Theories

Scholar Glenn Adamson, in his book *Thinking Through Craft*, eschews the art versus craft debate and instead presents a theory declaring craft as something entirely different. He frames craft as a dialectic process, rather than an end product. Art objects, by contrast, are evaluated as individual objects, entirely divorced from the process that produced them. Adamson describes craft as having three primary tenets: serving as supplement (as compared to the autonomous artwork), serving as a fundamentally "material experience" (as compared to the art world's chosen primacy of concept) and as operating on the basis of skill.[5] It is with the latter two tenets that I frame my research.

Adamson offers a unique perspective on skill which serves to elevate craft from the dismissed category of hobby to the central position of cultural expression. He highlights that skill is only defined through "a certain cultural perspective" and that material

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[4] Hasia Diner, "The United States," in The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 8: The Modern World, 1815–2000, ed. Mitchell B. Hart and Tony Michels, vol. 8, The Cambridge History of Judaism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 171.

[5] Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*, 4.

manipulation provides insight into cultural thought: it "preserves the thought process of the maker."[6] Adamson compares the story of Giotto's perfect circle to curator Michael Baxandall's study of German limewood sculpture during the Renaissance. Giotto's story, written about in Vasari's *Lives of the Artists,* tells of Giotto's demonstration of skill when courted by Pope Benedict IX. A courtier arrived at his doorstep and asked for proof of his skill; all Giotto drew was a circle and sent the courtier back to the Pope. Upon viewing "such a perfect circle that it was a marvel to see…the pope and many of his knowledgeable courtiers realized just how far Giotto surpassed all the other painters of his time in skill."[7] With the limewood sculptures, however, perfect circles are highly undesirable. Baxandall demonstrates that limewood dries in a process called starshake, leading to "the tendency of limewood sculptures to blow apart of their own accord" due to "uneven shrinkage in drying."[8] The indication of skill with these sculptures lies not in the ability to carve a perfect circle into the wood but rather with the ability to carve with the shape of the wood. And indeed, centuries later, these sculptures maintain their carved shapes.[9] A perfect circle only matters in a certain context, and when that context changes, its value depreciates in favor of other values such as the flexibility required to read radial cracking.

Clare M. Wilkenson-Weber and Alicia Ory DeNicola, editors of Critical Craft: Technology, Globalization, and Capitalism, use ethnographies from craftspeople working within a modern globalized context to uphold craft as relevant, socioculturally informative, and "fully contemporary."[10] Similar to Adamson, they consider craft as "a vital and fertile means to understand relationships between people, places, and time."[11] In their

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[6] Adamson, *Thinking through Craft,* 76.

[7] Adamson, *Thinking through Craft,* 70-71.

[8] Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*, 76.

[9] Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*, 76.

[10] Wilkinson-Weber and DeNicola, *Critical Craft*, 1.

[11] Wilkinson-Weber and DeNicola, *Critical Craft*, 1.

introduction, the two authors provide an overview of how material cultural expressions were originally separated in the West into either "art" or "craft." They cite the writings of Franz Boas, considered the founder of modern anthropology, as having both created a space for the study of craft as well as relegating craft to the othering realm of anthropology, far away from the field of art.[12] Relevantly for the purposes of this research, as I discuss below, Boas was also a German-born Jewish immigrant to the US. He spent years trying to define Jewish people as racially homogenous with white American Protestants and therefore not requiring anthropological study (and the associated othering that accompanied it).[13] Wilkenson-Weber and DeNicola include the following quote by anthropologist Clifford Geertz:

> "If you want to know what something means you should look in the first instance not at its theories or its findings, and certainly not what its anthropologists say about it; you should look at what the practitioners do."[14]

Geertz underscores the need to research materials from their own perspective and explains that anthropological analyses will not offer such a perspective. Wilkenson-Weber and DeNicola use the example of bowls and pots produced in Taiwanese and Chinese factories, both of which have a long history of manufacture prior to the Industrial Era that goes unseen because of an assumed historical narrative about industry.[15] They conclude the book's introduction by stating that "there is evident place for region-based studies of craft within specific social formations."[16]

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12 Wilkinson-Weber and DeNicola, *Critical Craft*, 2.

13 Barbara Kingsblatt-Gimblett, "Imagining Europe: The Popular Arts of American Jewish Ethnography," in *Divergent Jewish Cultures: Israel and America,* eds. Deborah Dash Moore and S. Ilan Troen (Yale University Press, 2001), 3.

14 Clifford Gertz as quoted in Wilkinson-Weber and DeNicola, *Critical Craft*, 4.

15 Wilkinson-Weber and DeNicola, Critical Craft, 13.

16 Wilkinson-Weber and DeNicola, *Critical Craft*, 15.

Archaeologist Maikel H. G. Kujipers makes a compelling case for an appreciation of skill, one of Adamson's tenets of craft, within the field of archaeology. Archaeologists have historically associated skilled craftsmanship with elites in the Bronze Age.[17] Kujipers highlights that this association is almost entirely theoretical and based on an *estimated* time spent creating. Many scholars have also supposed that use of copper by Bronze Age metallurgists was awe-inspired, because at high heat it undergoes chemical changes that could not be detected with the technology available at the time. They even went so far as to claim copper's transformation under heat is superior to that of clay. Many have imposed hyper-masculine tropes onto Bronze Age metallurgy by presuming that metal craftsmen "may have commanded considerable respect" and used it as a "medium for gaining control."[18] Kujipers evaluates these interpretations as academic "fetishes" that flatten craft into a singular idea not requiring further examination.[19] In his book, Kujipers proposes an alternative, more specific definition of skill which also bears on other craft research. He sees skill as "visible through the craft person's recognition of and response to a material."[20] By focusing on the creator's experience, rather than the academic's theoretical understanding, Kujipers paves the way for a complex material analysis rooted in contemporary understandings of the world.

Kujipers offers an alternate method of study which I apply to my own research. He uses materials themselves to "empirically demonstrate" the skills referenced in scholarship. He also focuses on production, rather than consumption, of objects, thereby echoing the way crafts people understand their own work. Kujipers goes one step further and utilizes input from skilled artisans about their work to better inform his evaluation of skill and perspective on the craft of metallurgy. Skilled crafters always use sensory indicators to

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[17] Kuijpers, *An Archaeology of Skill*, 1.

[18] Budd & Taylor and Vandkilde, as quoted in Kuijpers, *An Archaeology of Skill,* 3.

[19] Kuijpers, *An Archaeology of Skill*, 3-4.

[20] Kuijpers, *An Archaeology of Skill,* 2.

evaluate their process, as "skill is fundamentally dependent on the senses." He illustrates that modern day bronze casters can, in fact, identify the chemical percentage of tin by sight down to two percentage points because of the color change from red hues to yellows with the added tin – which would have likely been the way casters in the Bronze Age did their work.[21] Metallurgists don't necessarily need to know *why* something is happening in order to understand that it is happening or to interact with a material.

While the texts outlined above help me to position my study through craft theory, I work specifically on textiles, and, thus, important to my work is an understanding of textiles as carriers of memory. Carole Hunt analyses philosophical understandings of textiles as well as descriptions of textiles within narrative and describes textiles as "form[ing] an archive of our intimate existence."[22] Cloth offers a material connection to specific moments in history, sometimes personal and sometimes collective. Conversely, Hunt references Derrida's concept of 'archivization' by highlighting the ability of memory to be embedded, materially, into an object – in this case, cloth. (12) This can occur through the process of "imprinting," the infusing of cloth with smells, tears, stains, or other marks of use. Imprinting becomes especially relevant with items of the deceased, when textiles can become "material markers of grief."[23] Finally, Hunt describes the easy movement between the presence of collective memory and personal ones with a given textile. The effect is "unusually powerful."[24] This understanding of textiles directly informs the connection between craft and cultural expression, allowing cloth to connect the two by acting as the conduit for moments in history.

Rozsika Parker studies the connection between art, craft, embroidery, and femininity. She writes in *The Subversive Stitch* that the "ideology of femininity" came about at the

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[21] Kuijpers, *An Archaeology of Skill,* 9.

[22] Carole Hunt, "Re-Tracing the Archive -Materialising Memory" (University of Leeds, 2012), 2.

[23] Laura Tanner as quoted in Hunt, "Re-Tracing the Archive -Materialising Memory," 12-14.

[24] Hunt, "Re-Tracing the Archive -Materialising Memory," 20

same time as the creation of the art/craft divide and embroidery became synonymous with traditional femininity.[25] Embroidery, despite being pictorial, escaped definition as art because feminine creativity was delineated to craft, which in turn was considered "artistically less significant."[26] Similarly, paintings made by women were considered, as of 1981, a homogenous category. The true, underlying distinction between art and craft, Parker argues, is "*where* they are made and *who* makes them."[27] The bifurcated path of historical creativity informs the research on craft within this thesis.

When applied towards the craft economy of Eastern European Jews at the turn of the 20th century, these theories offer a firm base from which to view the various aspects of making as the community viewed them. Like Adamson's interpretation of the limewood sculptures, the crafted objects I study exist as materials and as sources of insight into the evolution of cultural thought during migration – a moment of great transition. Furthermore, Wilkenson-Weber and DeNicola's example of Taiwanese and Chinese bowl production underscores the need for a deeper examination of seemingly simplistic, ahistorical craft techniques. My research seeks to understand craft in a similar manner: from the perspective of the materials of a particular region of Eastern Europe traced through the process of migration as a way to understand not "Jewish culture" as a simplistic whole but rather as a documentation of recent change of a subset of the broader community due to historical pressures. Kujipers highlights the artificial elevation of metallurgy within the field of archaeology and Parker shows that similar, reversed logic was applied to fiber craft within the field of art. This research uses detailed historical information to examine those assumptions for deeper analysis. Hunt's analysis of textiles

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[25] Rozsika Parker, The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine (New York: Routledge, 1989), 5.

[26] Rozsika Parker, The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine (New York: Routledge, 1989), 5.

[27] Rozsika Parker, The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine (New York: Routledge, 1989), 4-5.

as both objects imprinted with physical markers of ancestors and markers of grief is affirmed by participant testimony. One woman kept an afghan from her grandmother preserved in plastic for several decades after her death, before eventually giving it to her daughter to use.

Through the use of primary sources and ethnographic interviews, in Chapters 2 and 3 I analyze crafts as inherently material items which were created using specific techniques with specific meanings. The craft economy of Eastern Europe and that of immigrants is one of need, rather than desire. Necessity creates a two-tiered system of craft techniques, in which sewing and knitting serve as ubiquitous methods learned by most women, with embroidery serving as a natural embellishment to a plethora of sewed items. Open-work techniques such as crochet, bobbin lace, and drawn work serve as optional art forms utilized less frequently for aesthetic purposes, rather than utility. Descriptions of craft work in primary sources implicitly highlight this hierarchy. Mary Antin's autobiography and the 1913 *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition I analyze in Chapter 2 present a broad picture of which craft items were available at the time and which were defined as skilled. Furthermore, contemporary descriptions of lacework as art from the turn of the 20th century place lace centrally as both a craft and an art, challenging Adamson's theory of craft as different from art and his claim that it no longer matters as to which items qualify as art. The crafted items described in the interviews offer a view into the change over time of Ashkenazi-American craft from a needs-based to a desire-based economy, a change which fundamentally alters the types of craft work creators engaged in.

1.2 Assimilation Theory

Mary Antin's story and the 1913 Exposition, in addition to celebrating handcraft, also provide a window into the specifics of how assimilation worked day to day and how it was absorbed differently by different people. Rubén G. Rumbaut, in summarizing the work of Alba, Nee, and Yinger, offers the following definition of assimilation:

"Sociologically, assimilation is defined as a multidimensional process of boundary reduction which blurs or dissolves an ethnic distinction and the social and cultural differences and identities associated with it."[28] Notably, the concept of assimilation is rooted in a distinctly American context of immigration. The concept is also considered controversial because scholars do not agree on a definition, it "doesn't travel well" and frequently does not translate. Furthermore, scholarly discussions are somewhat indistinguishable from local political ones, as prescriptive and descriptive arguments are seamlessly entwined.[29] Within this contested context, I choose to focus on assimilation because my focus group is within the United States and the concept is historically important to the community I'm researching. I believe that this intracommunal use of the term deserves attention as a driver of behavior, even as it is equally important to maintain some scholarly distance from its historical context.

Of note, the contemporary term for assimilation at the turn of the 20th century was "Americanization," which acted as a synonym[30] and was used more commonly. For the purposes of this research, I also use these terms interchangeably, especially when discussing primary sources that use the older term. I trust the reader to understand the modern nuance that exists when the term is applied in retrospect.

Milton Yinger's theory of assimilation and dissimilation outlines a didactic push-and-pull process. That process offers useful insight into the internal tension among first- and second-generation Ashkenazi immigrants between their open desires to Americanize and a deep fear of becoming too American. Yinger discusses assimilation as a real, identifiable

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[28] Rubén G. Rumbaut as quoted in Peter Kivisto, "The Revival of Assimilation in Historical Perspective," in *Incorporating Diversity: Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, rev. ed., edited by Peter Kivisto (London: Routledge, 2016), 158; Richard Alba and Victor Nee, "Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration," *The International Migration Review* 31, no. 4 (1997): 826–74; J. Milton Yinger, "Toward a Theory of Assimilation and Dissimilation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4, no. 3 (July 1981): 249–64.

[29] Kivisto, "The Revival of Assimilation," 4.

[30] Grover G. Huebner, "The Americanization of the Immigrant," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 27 (1906): 191.

phenomenon and defines it as "a process of boundary reduction that can occur when members of two or more societies, ethnic groups, or smaller social groups meet."[31] He describes assimilation as happening along a continuum with an end point of the moment when the shared ancestry of a particular group cannot predict their behavior as compared to the "total population" of a country.[32] Reaching that endpoint is rare and less important than what happens along the way.

Yinger also gives much attention to what he calls "dissimilation," or a strengthening of cultural boundaries serving as a reactionary force to assimilation. Dissimilation occurs simultaneously with assimilation. According to Yinger, "[t]o study the conditions under which cultural lines of division within a society are weakened is at the same time to study the conditions under which they are reinforced."[33] He says that evidence of dissimilation is much more visible than that of assimilation, and events like the *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition testify to exactly this phenomenon. As I will later elaborate, the exposition was created specifically in response to the perception of Americanization in Cincinnati, Ohio. Overtly, the exposition publicly celebrated many aspects of Jewish culture; latently, it continued the ongoing process of assimilation by actively choosing which aspects of Jewish culture to celebrate.

1.3 Self-Effacement

In order to understand the primary sources and the interviews of this research, I present some historical context as Yinger's theory applies to it. Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews migrated to North America from the Pale of Settlement and other locations in Eastern Europe in vast numbers beginning in 1882 and lessening in 1914 in what is known as the

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[31] Milton Yinger, "Assimilation and Dissimilation," in *Incorporating Diversity: Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, rev. ed., edited by Peter Kivisto (London: Routledge, 2016), 175.
[32] Yinger, "Assimilation and Dissimilation," 175.
[33] Yinger, "Assimilation and Dissimilation," 175.

Great Jewish Migration.[34] The Pale of Settlement was a vast area with shifting borders in Eastern Czarist Russia existing from 1791 – 1917 in which Jewish people had permission to live.[35] Though the Pale included Jews from a number of distinct local cultures, due to consistency in recording of origins and the collective experience of systemic oppression within its borders, for the specific purposes of this research, Jews migrating from the Pale will be considered a homogenous unit.

Eastern European Jews were not the first community of Jews to arrive in the US. One generation earlier, a much smaller number of Ashkenazi Jews from Germany migrated to the US between 1820 and 1880.[36] There were also other waves of earlier migration, including the migration of Sephardic Jews who came from Brazil (at the time a Dutch colony) to New Amsterdam[37]. Due to pre-existing cultural differences, the timing of their arrival in the US, and the context of their immigration, they are each considered a separate category. In this paper, I focus mainly on Jews of the Great Migration.

In the context of assimilation, using public writings as a reference, many first-generation Jewish immigrants living during the 1882-1914 period espoused two opinions on how to approach the fear of erasure: the desire to disappear entirely as a community, or at least in the eyes of white Christians (referred to frequently as "Americans"), and the desire to actively preserve Ashkenazi culture. Those in the latter category, however, often aimed to do so in a way that frames Jewishness as positive and non-threatening to white Christians – in other words, as palatable to a dominant audience. Following Yinger's

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[34] Lloyd P. Gartner, "The Great Jewish Migration 1881-1914: Myths and Realities," *Shofar* 4, no. 2 (1986): 15.

[35] John Klier, "Pale of Settlement," in YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, 2010, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Pale_of_Settlement.

[36] Hasia R. Diner. "German Immigrant Period in the United States," in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia,* February 27, 2009. https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/german-immigrant-period-in-united-states.

[37] Jonathan D. Sarna, American Judaism: A History (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2004), 1.

theory, the former falls largely under the assimilation category, while the latter acts as both an assimilative and dissimilative process as it reinforces cultural boundaries as much as it weakens them. I will focus first on the self-effacement category.

The timing of the German and Eastern European migrations meant that at the turn of the 20th century, German immigrants lived as contemporaries with some of the Eastern Europeans immigrants. At this time, German Jews had already established themselves in cities and were a large part of the resettlement effort for Eastern European Jews as well as an active voice in the (Jewish) public sphere. Thus here, towards the matter of self-effacement, I wish to highlight Franz Boas who exemplifies that line of thinking. Though Boaz was not part of the Great Migration, I focus on him due to his great influence, his public reflection of contemporary Jewish thought, and his overlap with Wilkenson-Weber and DeNicola's writings on the evolution of craft as a discipline.

Franz Boas is considered a founder of American anthropology and is infamous for claiming Jewish people were neither a race (as some were claiming at the time) nor as a people with a "distinctive culture."[38] Boas was born in Germany in 1858 and migrated to the US in 1887. His vivid interest in Native cultures and ethnography followed what Jacob Gruber has called a process of "salvage ethnography," an idea that Indigenous cultures were disappearing through widespread death and forced assimilation, and that the customs, material artefacts, and (in some cases) remains, should be recorded, collected, and stored in museums, such as the American Museum of Natural History, of which Boas was curator.[39] In relation to Eastern European Jewish immigrants, however, he believed cultural erasure would solve anti-Semitism. Xenophobic arguments after World War I used the ethnographies proffered by anthropologists to define ethnic groups as racial groups and legally discriminate against them. Boas worked hard to combat this trend and

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[38] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Imagining Europe," 3.

[39] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Imagining Europe," 3; Jacob W. Gruber, "Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology," American Anthropologist 72, no. 6 (1970): 1289–99.

claimed culture existed separately from race. He positively framed examples of immigrants casting off their European habits. He viewed all cultural changes as "loss" and thus successful Americanization, as well as proof of "the plasticity of human behavior."[40] If Jews could escape the framing of a racial category, and Boas worked hard to prevent the creation of an ethnography about Jews, then perhaps they could escape immigration restrictions and broader anti-Semitism, both in the US and Europe.[41]

Others echoed this sentiment, especially German immigrants, who were often considered elite due to their wealth and prior cultural status in Germany. Adolph Ochs, a German Jewish immigrant and prominent publisher at the *New York Times,* claimed in 1921, "The Jews are not a nation. They only share a religion."[42] Louis Marshall, a renowned lawyer and Jewish advocate, took a public stand against Jewish participation in a 1921 exposition heralding diversity and immigrant contributions to American culture titled *America's Making.* He himself was a child of German Jewish immigrants and a member of the General Committee for the exposition.[43] The evidence of a push to weaken cultural boundaries, or assimilate, is clear. If Jewish people can simply merge seamlessly with the hegemonic white Protestant culture, they could neutrally practice their religion without fear of attack. Boas', Ochs', and Marshall's argument seems blind to the extent to which culture and religion are intertwined. The idea of an entirely homogenous culture, with the exception of where one goes to pray on their respective weekend Sabbath day, if taken to its logical endpoint is an utter impossibility (and,

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[40] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Imagining Europe," 3.

[41] Note: Franz Boas' portrayal of indigenous cultures was deeply problematic and his approach to anthropology has since been proven incorrect. The focus on him in this thesis is not an endorsement of his theories. Rather, it is to call attention to the oppressive social environment in which he formulated such ideas and how that environment, and his work, had reverberations against others and his own people for decades to come. For specifics on the problems with his theory and additional sources, see *Boas in the Age of BLM and Idle No More: Re-Evaluating the Boasian Legacy*: https://histanthro.org/reviews/re-evaluating-the-boasian-legacy/.

[42] Adolf Ochs as quoted in Ilana Abramovitch, "America's Making Exposition and Festival (New York, 1921): Immigrant Gifts on the Altar of America" (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 1996), 211.

[43] Ilana Abramovitch, "America's Making Exposition and Festival," 211.

ironically, a rather American one at that). Furthermore, Yinger's theory does not quite fit in such a scenario, as the dissimilation that should coincide with assimilation does not present itself. This does not weaken the theory, but rather, emphasizes the fallacy of the fantasy. In light of the 1924 Immigration Act, which drastically limited immigration,[44] and the United States' refusal to accept European Jewish refugees during the Holocaust[45], the attempt at cultural erasure failed to protect the community from hegemonic prejudice.

1.4 Non-Threatening Preservation

In contrast to the self-effacement approach was the desire for the preservation of culture, albeit only so far as it remained palatable to white Christendom. In the era before the Holocaust, the Eastern European Jewish community living in the US tended to define Jewish culture first as a value system and second as presenting through material items. A look at the *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition, which I expand upon in the following chapter, and the man spearheading it, progressive social worker Boris D. Bogen, can serve to illuminate non-threatening preservation further. The exposition also serves as an example of textiles as imprinted objects which carry, in this case, collective history.

The *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition was a fair in 1913 at the Jewish Settlement House in Cincinnati intended to show off the richly diverse culture of Jewish immigrants living in the US by an exposition of handmade items. The event was hosted as a response to the question posed in the journal *Jewish Charities*: "Should this culture and art be preserved or should they give way as speedily as possible to Americanism?"[46] This type of question

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[44] Hasia Diner, "The United States," in The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 8: The Modern World, 1815–2000, ed. Mitchell B. Hart and Tony Michels, vol. 8, The Cambridge History of Judaism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 175.

[45] "America and the Holocaust," Facing History & Ourselves, n.d., https://www.facinghistory.org/defying-nazis/america-and-holocaust.

[46] *Jewish Charities* as quoted in Barbara Kingsblatt-Gimblett, "Imagining Europe," 7.

appeared regularly as part of public discussion for at least several years prior to the event, seen most clearly through a statement authored by the board of the settlement house, quoted as describing a "growing indifference to the good and wholesome Old"[47] in 1909. This kind of exposition, in which local immigrants were asked to temporarily donate their handmade heirlooms to showcase their community's culture and positive contributions to American society, was popular at the time, as was an understanding that culture manifested itself through crafted objects. By showcasing such objects, the exposition placed 'Jewish culture' on full display, highlighting theirs as distinct from American culture in a detailed, tangible, emphatic response to their original question.

Boris D. Bogen, a Russian Jewish immigrant, worked towards successful resettlement of new immigrants in Cincinnati. At the time, Cincinnati was a center of Jewish life in the US, and Bogen occupied a central role in planning the exposition. He saw the phenomenon of "Americanization" as the embodiment of cultural erasure, not the solution to it, and viewed the exposition as part of his "educational crusade"[48] to stop Americanization. His overview of the exposition, published in *Jewish Charities* journal in 1913, offers insight into his thinking. He pinpointed Jewish homes as the breeding ground of Americanization. He furthermore viewed the Jewish home as inherently weak in its ability to resist the forces of assimilation and as a site from which the community must fight against it. He determined that the solution to the problem of Americanization was simply a "strenuous effort…to return to Jewish culture."[49] Bogen notably does not fault the white Christian hegemony as the problem nor does he call for a cessation of their demand that immigrants become acceptable. His convergence on the home as the site of moral disintegration and salvation recalls Rozsika Parker's connection of femininity and craft. Just as the home, and, by implication, women, preserve Jewish culture, so, too, will craft.

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[47] Boris D. Bogen as quoted in Barbara Kingsblatt-Gimblett, "Imagining Europe," 6.

[48] Boris D. Bogen as quoted in Barbara Kingsblatt-Gimblett, "Imagining Europe," 8.

[49] Boris D. Bogen as quoted in Barbara Kingsblatt-Gimblett, "Imagining Europe," 8.

Usually, these cultural displays were put on for a white Christian audience to demonstrate the immigrant cultures living in a given city.[50] In this case, the exposition was put on by Jews for the Jewish community writ large. *Jews of Many Lands* included not only the communities of mass migration from Eastern Europe but also those of smaller migrations from a variety of places, with a total representation from 27 countries. The fair consisted of booths with crafted items from each country, set in a domestic scene[51] that allowed participants to walk through and glean a rosy, apolitical picture of "the Jewish community" without needing to engage in deeper aspects of any particular culture nor consider the geopolitical pressures and hierarchies interconnecting them. The aim was clear: to unify the disparate communities under the umbrella term "Jews" and to combat the rising xenophobia at the time with a wholly positive representation of the Jewish people. The need for a positive representation reveals the pressures of assimilation - though the event was marketed to Jewish people, it was designed to be palatable to Christians if they were to walk in, regardless of whether or not they did so. Dissimilation can be seen in the immense pride in Jewish culture, especially extending beyond individual subcommunities. The push and pull of the exposition includes some communal agency as well: even if they created it in response to outside ideals of how immigrants should look like, the community still chose which aspects to strengthen and which to minimize. Further research into how choice affects assimilation will offer crucial insight into how craft subsequently changed alongside other aspects of culture.

How might craft theory apply to the *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition? Adamson's linkage of craft to cultural expression has an overt connection to the exposition; more subtly, craft in this instance reflects the specific cultural tension within the Jewish community in Cincinnati in the 1910s between the safety of invisibility and the nationalism of

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[50] Diana Greenwold, "'The Great Palace of American Civilization': Allen Eaton's Arts and Crafts of the Homelands, 1919-1932," *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture* 3 (June 5, 2014): 100-101.
[51] Barbara Kingsblatt-Gimblett, "Imagining Europe," 7.

preservation. The exposition reflects a dissimilative, active choice of nationalist pride,[52] which in turn furthered the process of assimilation by minimizing the regional differences within the broader community that allowed for the production of such varied objects.

One entry in the exhibition underscores the craft objects as active sites of collective memory and markers of grief. The item, labeled simply as a "Tales" (spelled today as *tallis,* the prayer shawl*)* from Russia, has an added description: "original weaver killed in Kishineff Pogrow"[53] (this was likely a typo for *pogrom*, as the pamphlets were originally typed on a typewriter with occasional mistakes). Many Jewish immigrants cite *pogroms* (targeted massacres) as a primary reason for immigration, and this notation connects the tallis to an influential moment in history while also displaying it as a material remembrance of loved ones lost.

Rozsika Parker's analysis of the art/craft divide applies here as well. These crafted objects were proudly upheld as skilled representations of the Jewish identity. Though it is unclear if each item had the name of its maker (or donor) listed next to it, they were listed individually in the pamphlet by name and address. However, the structure of the event grouped the items together by cultural locale, not by autonomous creators; the power of these items was in their numbers, not in the individual creativity of any single maker. Doing so homogenized the crafters as "women," and, like embroidery, the pieces represented an expression of femininity, rather than the self-expression of an autonomous artist. The sudden visibility of normally invisible work was only possible in a way that enforced the ongoing hierarchy between masculinity and femininity, and, by extension, art and craft.

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[52] The term "nationalism" does not refer to a nation-state but is rather used here in place of "cultural" to acknowledge the many cultures present within the umbrella of Jewish peoplehood.

[53] Jewish Settlement House, ed., "Jews of Many Lands Exposition Pamphlet" (Dunie Printing Co, January 18, 1913), Hebrew Union College.

1.5 Mary Antin: A Contradiction

Mary Antin, renowned author and an Eastern European Jewish immigrant, presents a superb example of the contextual tension between Americanization and self-effacement as she also frames culture as interchangeable with textiles. Her book, *The Promised Land*, published in 1912, is an autobiographical account of Antin's immigrant experience from current day Belarus to the United States and serves as a centerpiece of my research. She describes her new country as well as her transition to American culture with endless pride. She frequently uses clothing as a metaphor for her transition, and yet, while she prefers her machine-made American clothes, she can't quite let go of her handmade past.

A look at the book's introduction makes this quickly apparent. Antin opens the book by immediately and utterly distancing herself from the story within. These are the first sentences of her introduction, which she published at the age of 32:

> "I was born, I have lived, and I have been made over. Is it not time to write my life's story? I am just as much out of the way as if I were dead, for I am absolutely other than the person whose story I have to tell. Physical continuity with my earlier self is no disadvantage. I can analyze my subject. I can reveal everything; for she, and not I, is my real heroine. My life I have still to live; her life ended when mine began."[54]

Antin wrote her autobiography for a broadly middle-class audience, in order to "answer the concerns" about her ethnic otherness as she cultivated a writing career.[55] Concurrently, she rose to fame on a story recording minute cultural specifics about her Jewish identity and immigrant experience. She even claimed the story "sought to

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[54] Mary Antin, *The Promised Land*, Penguin Classics (New York: Penguin Books, 2012 [1912]), 1.

[55] Susanne A. Shavelson, "Anxieties of Authorship in the Autobiographies of Mary Antin and Aliza Greenblatt," *Prooftexts* 18, no. 2 (1998): 161–86. 162.

convince Americans of the value of an unrestricted immigrant policy."[56] The inherent tension in distancing oneself from an autobiography acutely reveals the tension between assimilation and dissimilation. Though she disavowed much of Jewish culture, "the source of her oppression,"[57] which is apparent merely in her use of the anglicized name Mary, she can never undo the fact that her immigrant identity is the source from which she draws her success. Critics praised her book, using her own descriptions of her experience, and the popularity of the book over the next forty years was likely due largely to Antin's "endorsement" of the "American approach to absorbing immigrants."[58] Like Boas, Antin strongly favors Americanization. And yet, a dissimilation exists with Antin's very public portrayal of her immigrant life and her simultaneous success by bowing to assimilative pressure to weaken ties to her community. Her autobiography is filled with descriptions of textiles and textile making in Jewish Poland, such as her metaphor of thrusting off the "heavy garment" of the past in her process of assimilation.[59] A reading of this autobiography through the lens of cloth-based analysis yields great insight into the crafts of the Eastern European first generation as well as how the intersection between craft making and assimilation may have affected Ashkenazi makers.

1.6 Textiles as Textured History

Textiles offer specific context into the historical moments of their creation. Their makers were often grouped into a single unit, rather than individual creators, and these pieces can often provide larger sociological analyses of the Jewish community. Even as sites of collective history, each piece retains imprints of their individual makers, as the itemized record of the *Jews of Many Lands* pamphlet demonstrates. Furthermore, communal agency affects these particular moments in time, as both Mary Antin and the exposition

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[56] Shavelson, "Anxieties of Authorship," 162.

[57] Shavelson, "Anxieties of Authorship," 164.

[58] Shavelson, "Anxieties of Authorship," 164.

[59] Antin, *The Promised Land,* 3.

show. This agency makes the process of “assimilation” not something that can be accepted or resisted, but rather a didactic, ongoing adjustment of assimilation and dissimilation.

In short, textile crafts, as representative of culture, offers a lens through which to understand the historical moment of the Eastern European Jewish community in the United States at the turn of the century. In turn, the historical moment and geographic location in which Ashkenazi Jews find themselves informs the textiles they produce, which I will demonstrate in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

2 Textile References in Primary Sources

In order to investigate textile knowledge in Eastern European Jewish communities at the turn of the century, I first turned to primary sources for mentions of craft. As craft history was not widely recorded, I searched through quite a number of sources for the information embedded within, often in the form of casual mentions, which I will discuss in further detail.

For the purposes of this research, it is important to differentiate between paid work in manufacturing and production, which happened to be in the garment industry, and textiles made by hand, most often in the home. Many Ashkenazi immigrants of the Great Migration worked in the garment factories. They worked long hours for low wages. Such jobs often consisted of short, repetitive tasks that did not build skill over time. Employers were equally uninterested in expanding the skillsets of their workers; they often mistreated their employees and maintained high-risk work environments. The 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire famously exposed such conditions. Jewish employees successfully organized the workforce, efforts which in the instance of Pauline Newman, Rose Schneiderman, and Clara Lemlich Shavelson lead to the founding of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.[60] While the history of Jewish immigrants in the garment industry is not the subject of this thesis, it is a history proudly cherished by their descendants and does bear on the subject of handcraft.

Some migrants used hand skills in a professional context as tailors or milliners, with knowledge frequently carried over from Eastern Europe, which kept both professions

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[60] Alice Kessler-Harris, "Labor Movement in the United States," in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* (Jewish Women's Archive, December 31, 1999), https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/labor-movement-in-united-states.

open to Jewish people.[61] Some also began businesses by hand in the home and later expanded to mass production in which hand craft no longer applied, though knowledge of craft and design remained present. In these scenarios, a gender divide presents itself. Based on the family history discussed in the interviews, included in the next chapter, men who worked as tailors or in cloth-related businesses only performed craft work in their professional settings and largely did not do such work at home. Women in the same capacities did make garments and other items at home for their families and also frequently passed on their skills to later generations. This study focuses on textile objects as carriers of community history and family memory. Therefore, I studied tailors and businessmen *as makers,* rather than as businessmen, by way of the objects they made for their homes that their families treasured for many years afterward. Furthermore, written documentation of textile skill sharing tended to appear in women's sections or women's magazines and fewer articles exist in those magazines of skill sharing between tailors, milliners, and the like. Individuals I spoke to who had compiled family history and family trees tended to record the professional histories of tailors and garment businessmen (e.g., where they worked and when), and often did not have information about skill acquisition or creative process of the tailors and business owners. Because women made items that remained in the family, tended to pass on their skills to other family members, and primary sources on craft were directed at them, they remain the primary focus of this research.

2.1 The Autobiography of Mary Antin

The fundamental questions of this research project ask, firstly, about the specific techniques used within the Jewish community to create textiles by hand and, secondly, about how those techniques interacted with the experience of immigration and cultural

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[61] "Modern Jewish History: Pale of Settlement," in *Jewish Virtual Library* (The Gale Group, 2008), https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-pale-of-settlement.

adjustment. Mary Antin's famous autobiography, published in 1912 at the age of 32, offers contemporary insight into both questions.

The Promised Land provides a written record of Antin's memories from early childhood through the end of her teenage years. When describing her childhood from the book, I will refer to her as "Mary," and when I describe her as an author, I will use either "Antin" or "Mary Antin." In describing her life, Antin inadvertently provides a number of references to handmade textiles, and because she writes her story of immigration, those references provide insight into what knowledge was taken from Eastern Europe and how it was transferred to a US context. Such insight is limited to Antin's family, as she did not write about other immigrant families. Antin wrote in such detail, so close in time to the original era of study, that I have chosen to use her story as a basis for comparison with other stories. *The Promised Land*, as an autobiography, was written from memory, which means that some of the details may be inaccurate. Mary Antin herself admits, in the book, that she stays true to her memories even when presented with inconsistencies: "I have been told that they were not dahlias at all, but poppies…I have so long believed in them, that if I were to try to see *poppies* in those red masses over the wall, the whole garden crumbles away, and leaves me a gray blank. I have nothing against poppies. It is only that my illusion is more real to me than reality."[62] The information I infer from a belated record of memories is general, not specific. Antin misremembers the type of flower but correctly remembers the presence of flowers. I use her book to understand the types of textiles that were around in Polotsk and subsequently the United States, rather than as a record of specific items.

Mary Antin, originally Maryashe Antin and affectionately known as Mashke, came from a small town in the Pale of Settlement called Polotsk (modern day Belarus). She records quite a number of textiles, in great variety, that surrounded her as a child. A quote early

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[62] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 66.

on in the book summarizes her childhood world: "A girl's real schoolroom was her mother's kitchen. There she learned to bake and cook and manage, to knit, sew, and embroider; also to spin and weave, in country places."[63]Antin describes a needs-based creative environment. Highlighting sewing, knitting, and embroidery emphasizes their primacy, especially when placed right after baking, cooking, and managing. Crocheting is not mentioned until two chapters later, taught to Antin's mother as part of paid lessons also teaching Russian, German, and singing.[64] Her mother grew up wealthy and had the great privilege of education, especially as a woman, and the connection of crochet to other luxurious knowledge like Russian and German underscores it's tangential position within the hierarchy of craft techniques. By contrast, Antin's mother "learned knitting from watching her playmates,"[65] meaning knitting was common knowledge and crocheting was additional, a contrast to how the two are often paired together today.

Antin describes the process of learning knitting from her grandmother, cooped up at home in the winter while her mother and older sister ran the shop. She successfully learned how and attempted to make socks, but as a novice, frequently dropped stitches. Upon such a discovery, Mary would unravel everything until reaching the dropped stitch, pick it back up, and then continue. This process frustrated her grandmother so much that she finally took away Mary's needles. Antin often turns to textiles as metaphors and, pondering her childhood preoccupation with perfection, she thinks of her friends, "among whom also I find an impressive number with a stitch dropped somewhere in the pattern of their souls."[66] Antin frequently sees fabric and culture as inextricably linked. She also describes winding and worsting the yarn for knitting as children while the women sewed at night, as a way of being together. Everyone particularly enjoyed those

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[63] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 29.

[64] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 43.

[65] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 43.

[66] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 82.

evenings if someone told a story while they worked.[67] Winding and worsting indicate a closer proximity to raw production than Antin experienced in big cities in the US, and such scenes of prepping raw materials or doing textile work in groups do not appear after migration.

Mary Antin does not spend time describing the process of sewing. Evidence of its presence is implied, however, with every mention of fabric. Antin writes of silk dresses,[68] a blue sash curtain,[69] and a very dear satin dress and cloak, which her grandmother was forced to sell after Mary's mother remained ill for a year and a half. Her grandmother, "eyes blinded by tears, groped in the big wardrobe for my mother's satin dress and velvet mantle; and after that it did not matter any more what was taken out of the house."[70] It's unclear whether a tailor sewed those items or the family did; however, they were precious because of the fabric itself, and the loss of such special items reverberated strongly throughout the household.

Antin's mother's trousseau also inspired awe and reverence in the women of the community. As a wealthy bride, her parents purchased a great many items and employed "the best tailor in Polotsk" for the "cloaks and gowns" and a seamstress who required weeks to create the lingerie.[71] The expense was so great that "[t]he wedding gown alone cost every kopek of fifty rubles, as the tailor's wife reported all over Polotsk."[72] Antin's mother herself "crocheted many yards of lace to trim the best sheets, and fine silk coverlets adorned the plump beds."[73] Textiles had value and meaning, especially in

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[67] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 84.

[68] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 45.

[69] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 66.

[70] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 111.

[71] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 50.

[72] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 50.

[73] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 50.

relation to major events like a wedding, and the memory they held carried well beyond the life of those garments within the family.

At one point, Mary and her older sister Fetchke (later Frieda) apprenticed to a milliner and dress maker, respectively, in preparation for when they followed their father to the US. Antin describes much about her work with the milliner. She "watched [her] mistress build up a chimney pot of straw and things." She shredded bonnets that were no longer viable for wear (presumably for lining the hats) and collected spools and thimbles from the community "and other far-rolling objects." As an apprentice, she also ran many errands, describing the experience as a common one for apprenticeships. Being frail, and – mainly – underdressed, she grew ill in the cold and was sent home for not being useful enough.[74] Though the milliner profession is not the focus of this study, such a description offers a wealth of information about the textile environment of Polotsk in the late 19th century.

In addition to the primary techniques of sewing and knitting, Antin also mentions lacework. The Friday night challah was elegantly covered with crocheted lace,[75] presumably the result of Antin's mother's lessons in crochet, as was the aforementioned crochet lace trim for the bed sheets. Antin also describes the introduction of "Russian lace" (bobbin lace) to Polotsk, which Antin later learned well enough to teach. She tells the story thusly:

> But when the fad for 'Russian lace' was introduced into Polotsk by a family of sisters who had been expelled from St. Petersburg, and all feminine Polotsk, on both sides of the [river] Dvina, dropped knitting and crochet needles and embroidery frames to take up pillow and bobbins…The Russian sisters charged enormous fees for lessons and made a fortune out of the sale of patterns while they held the monopoly. Their pupils passed on the art at reduced fees, and their pupils' pupils charged still less; until even the

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[74] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 119.

[75] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 59.

> humblest cottage rang with the pretty click of bobbins, and my Cousin Rachel sold steel pins by the ounce, instead of by the dozen, and the women exchanged cardboard patterns from one end of town to the other.[76]

In a needs-based craft economy, the value of lace derived from the ability to sell it and to sell lessons on how to make it. However, clearly the women desired to make it because of its beauty and because of its novelty as a new aesthetic: Antin remembers everyone learning the technique and does not record anything about subsequent sales. In a strapped economy burdened by steep taxes from the Czar and an oversaturated market of limited professions,[77] the moment a new avenue of interest appears, Polotsk creates a small economy around it. The "Russian sisters" charge the starting price for lessons, and the whole community learns as time passes and lessons become cheaper with every new teacher. This also emphasizes the communal aspect of textile work in Polotsk – everyone learns at the same time and the monetary exchange helps those involved to continue. Mary herself capitalizes on a new market during her six-month stay with her uncle's family in nearby Vitebsk, which had not yet seen the lace. She teaches others the technique and buys gifts for her whole family with the money she earns.

As I laid out in Chapter 1, cultural exchange and craft knowledge has a stronger correlation with geographic location than heritage. The passage quoted above points toward that idea, as the "intricate art" comes from Russian St. Petersburg, rather than as an organically developed technique based on community craft or from a closer, Jewish town. Furthermore, the entire town of Polotsk, as well as several in Vitebsk, willfully chooses to learn a technique that is known to come from Russian Christians in St. Petersburg. None seem to have any fear of conversion – a fate "worse than death by torture" – as they did in circumstances Antin describes, such as Jewish boys being conscripted or kidnapped to eventually be sent to the army, fears of violence during

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[76] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 127.

[77] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 19

Christian parades through the town, or pogroms.[78] Nor was it a hated but necessary evil, like having a large portrait of Alexander III hanging prominently in the living room, in case government officers came by.[79] The bobbin lace simply served as a non-threatening way to beautify their lives, expand their creative skillsets, and earn some additional income.

Upon arrival to the US, there is a marked shift in both the quantity of textiles described in the text and the variety. As her father had already been living in the US for three years, Mary and the rest of her family receive a number of specific instructions immediately upon landing. Sticking one's head out of a window was simply not done, and neither was pointing. When they arrive at their new apartment, Mary uses textiles to compare it to their home in Polotsk, during their wealthier period: there, they had "upholstered parlors, embroidered linen…featherbeds heaped halfway to the ceiling; we had clothes presses dusky with velvet and silk and fine woolen." During the poorer years, after her mother became ill, they "cook[ed] in earthen vessels…and [wore] cotton." The new apartment looked much more like the latter than the former; however, because everything was American, the children felt wealthy (less so their mother). The family also learned of the word "greenhorn," and promptly set about monitoring their behavior and clothing to avoid being called one. They went to a department store to buy new clothes so as to "be dressed from head to foot in American clothing." In doing so, "we exchanged our hateful homemade European costumes…for real American machine-made garments, and issued forth glorified in each other's eyes."[80] American identity is directly connected with both mass production and superiority, whereas the inflection of the term "costume," rather than clothing or garment, infuses a sense of inferiority into both the handmade and European, and serves to create distance from what has now become undesirable.

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[78] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 11

[79] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 17.

[80] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 146-149.

Furthermore, the next sentence connects garments, culture, and the assimilation process all together: "With our despised immigrant clothing we also shed our impossible Hebrew names." Whereas in the Pale of Settlement, Mary viewed conversion as "worse than death by torture," now she and her whole family were quite willing to take on Christian names. Maryashe became Mary, Fetchke became Frieda, Joseph remained Joseph, and Deborah became Dora.[81] In the same moment as they change their clothes, they also change their names, while developing an understanding of their culture as lesser. Culture remains deeply connected to textiles, manifested here as clothing, and pressures to change their ways in order to become more like white Protestant Americans led directly to changes of clothes and names together.

Mary's parents send her to school, given her previous scholastic achievements in Polotsk, and her older sister Frieda goes to work in a garment factory. From this point on, neither spends much time at home making textiles at all, either sewing or lace. Mary prioritizes school and largely develops other interests, as she never had strong desires for domestic activities. Frieda, who did enjoy such things, simply loses her free time. At notable moments in her siblings' lives, Frieda takes time after work to sew them a dress. On the first day of school in Boston, she makes Mary and Dora each a dress.[82] Antin's gray calico holds deep meaning for her and she describes Frieda making it at length: "so longingly did [Frieda] regard it as the crisp, starchy breadths of it slid between her fingers;" "she matched the scrolls and flowers with the utmost care;" Frieda "ben[t] to adjust a ruffle to the best advantage."[83] Mary's first day at school was inseparable from her new dress; both allowed her to enter the world of America with confidence and poise, and both remain in her memory years afterwards.

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[81] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 149.

[82] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 158.

[83] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 158.

Frieda again does this for Antin's esteemed graduation from primary school several years later. Using her own wages, she "appropriated I do not know what fabulous sums…and brought away such finery as had never graced our flat before." Many nights Frieda "cut and snipped and measured and basted and stitched," later producing "a white disorder of tucked breadths, curled ruffles…and swirls of fresh lace." Antin does not specify whether the lace was created or purchased; given Frieda's domestic skills from Polotsk, those of their mother's, as well as the term "fresh," it's possible she made it by hand. To finish, she bought "the sash with the silk fringes," and it "was pronounced a most beautiful dress."[84] The continued emphasis on sewing in the US highlights necessity as the primary driver of craft. The care with which Antin describes Frieda making the dress, and the extensive time spent on the material details of each dress, shows also the continued importance textiles hold in their lives. Notably, even after living in the country for several years, the communal aspect of new textiles does not transfer to America. Frieda sews alone and the joy in the garment is shared solely within the family.

A final note from *The Promised Land* is the transition of Antin's mother away from her religiously-required wig and, tangentially, other religious traditions. The wig, or *sheitel,* is often strongly associated with the cloth hair covering, or *teichel,* which could be put on quickly in the home if necessary, though none is mentioned in the story. Antin writes of her father's great "ambition to make Americans of us," beginning even before their journey overseas. In a letter to her mother, he asks her to travel without her wig – an enormous request to ask of a married woman – "as a first step of progress." The custom of public appearance with natural hair had also begun in Polotsk. Antin writes, "[b]ut the breath of revolt against orthodox externals was at this time beginning to reach us in Polotsk from the greater world, notably from America." She continues with the predicament this presented: "Sons whose parents had impoverished themselves by paying the fine for non-appearance for military duty, in order to save their darlings from

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[84] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 219.

the inevitable sins of violated Judaism while in the service, sent home portraits of themselves with their faces shaved."[85] This unique instance offers insight into Americanization, as Jews referred to it in the US, occurring simultaneously in Europe among people who had never been to America. The term "cultural change" fits better here, as people in Polotsk were not surrounded by Americans nor subjected to daily pressures to conform. It shows the great influence of American culture; it further shows that Polotsk was being influenced by other cultures besides – from "the greater world." Further research is needed as to the nature of the cultural change in Eastern Europe during the time frame of this study in order to offer a proper comparison.

Upon arrival in Boston, Antin's mother's divestment from religiosity continued, slowly. Her father "allowed her to keep a Jewish kitchen as long as she pleased, but did not want us children to refuse invitations to the table of our Gentile neighbors." She lit the Shabbat candles on Friday night while he kept the store open through to Sunday. Eventually, she settled into a rhythm of keeping Shabbat on Sundays throughout the year, like her neighbors, except during the High Holidays, when she returned to the synagogue. Antin summarizes the demands placed on her: "My mother might believe and worship as she pleased, up to the point where her orthodoxy began to interfere with the American progress of the family." Antin describes this tension as a "disorganization of our family life" and equally as a "price…levied on every immigrant Jewish household where the first generation clings to the traditions of the Old World, while the second generation leads the life of the New." Antin ends the chapter by describing her first meal at "a genuine American household," that of her beloved teacher, Miss Dillingham, at which she is passed ham and, after a private moment of horror and physical struggle which Miss Dillingham is not privy to, decides to eat it, sparing her teacher of embarrassment of the

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[85] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 192-193.

faux pas.[86] Jewish culture again exists interchangeably with textiles – in this case, the wig/tichel; in removing it, Antin's mother also begins to remove her culture, so much so that her children eventually eat high *trayf* (non-kosher meat). The desire, or perhaps need, to fit in holds above all else, even strong cultural taboos like treyf, and prevent her even from teaching her children how best to live. At every moment of their process of becoming American, the Antins connect their experiences with garments.

2.2 The Journal of Jeanette Fishelov

Mary Antin's immigration experience has several parallels to that recorded by another young Belarussian immigrant. Jeanette Fishelov (eventually Jeanette Fishelov Cirlin) was an Ashkenazi Jewish immigrant from the Pale of Settlement who migrated in 1914 at the age of 14.[87] She spent the European years of her childhood in a town called Luben, part of modern-day Belarus, less than 190 miles southwest of where Mary Antin lived. She kept a personal journal during from 1913 - 1915, the years immediately preceding and following her immigration to Chicago. Some entries in the first volume are backdated to 1912 but were written in 1913. The journal is separated into two volumes, one for each school year of writing. I obtained her unpublished journal with permission from her family, who had it translated to English by Mikhail Orenkin almost a century later from the original Russian. Fishelov's journal serves as an illuminating augmentation of Antin's autobiography, highlighting the immediate effects of the American immigration process, recorded in real time.

Fishelov writes a single line about textiles in the first volume, in the first paragraph of the first entry. While this is one of only two mention of textiles in either volume, Fishelov's writing does much to illuminate the experience of assimilation and dissimilation in the United States during the Great Migration period. She writes of having gone to an

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[86] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 192-196.

unnamed fair and compiles a short list of the items she found notable: "a variety of handicraft items: embroidered towels, dresses, napkins, tablecloths, carpets, and so on."[88] This list offers a general overview of some of the materials still being made by hand in the Pale of Settlement in 1913 and underscores a needs-based craft economy. Most of the items are sewed and some utilize embroidery to decorate things that already needed to be made for practical use. This stands in comparison to lace, which is made separately, rather than on top of something already made. These specific items, while standing largely without physical detail, can serve as a reference point for other regional listings of craft.

In the first volume, Fishelov describes a comparably slower life than the one she encounters in the United States. Volume I has a high frequency of entries, specific mentions of leisure activities spread out over time, and the entries dwell on philosophical questions and meandering thoughts that don't necessarily pertain to practical tasks. For the months in which she writes, most have 2-4 entries spanning sometimes two pages each. Gaps in entries do not usually span more than a month. Fishelov spends considerable time discussing social dynamics in her classes – who was called up by the teacher to answer a question and how they did, stolen moments in the first few minutes of class before the teacher began the lesson, and two full pages on the moral dilemma put to her year of whether to give money to a recently arrived and somewhat mysterious "travelling student."[89] She even took the time to copy the contents of a letter passed around during class which stated each individual's opinion on the matter. Fishelov describes a late-night foray perusing "old letters…written in ancient Hebrew." She enjoys staying up late, without expressing tiredness, while her father got lost in his memories.[90]

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[88] Jeanette Fishelov, *"Diary of Jeanette Fishelov Volume I"* (unpublished manuscript 1915), typescript, August 26, 1913.

[89] Fishelov, *"Diary Volume I,"* November 30, 1912.

[90] Fishelov, *"Diary Volume I,"* April 19, 1912.

Notably, Fishelov writes a passage lamenting her options for how to spend her winter break, described as both "the holidays" and "Christmas." She writes:

> How am I going to spend my spare hours? …It is my 7th year in the gymnasium [school] and I still don't have any company or the ability to spend my free time however I want. That's true not only for me but pretty much for everyone around me….At the same time, one can't be working constantly, there should be some time to relax mentally…unfortunately, it's unobtainable here in our town.[91]

Fishelov clearly desires more time for leisure to spend as she pleases. In the end, she decides to take drawing lessons, to ice skate, and to practice music, regretting mainly that she might end up doing those things without friends. The time required to write all this by hand, and her eventual selection of several leisure activities, still indicates a general liveliness and a much higher amount of time to herself than she experiences in the States.

Volume II opens on American soil. It begins in a similar style to Volume I, with longer entries full of details and cohesive narratives. The writing begins in November, which has 4 lengthy entries, followed by January, which has two entries stretching several pages, largely of short paragraphs on separate topics. February has a single entry of 4 sentences, and then large gaps appear between entries, stretching 6 and then 8 weeks between. Some entries end abruptly, mid-thought. Fishelov writes primarily of the search for work and her various jobs, which she must balance on top of school. By the second page she already feels pressured: "Here in America there is truly no time to live."[92] Fishelov finds herself under enormous pressure to work and slowly her emotional state declines. She writes on 6 separate occasions that she doesn't have time. Her specific descriptions of

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[91] Fishelov, *"Diary Volume I,"* December 20, 1912.

[92] Jeanette Fishelov, *"Diary of Jeanette Fishelov Volume II"* (unpublished manuscript 1915), typescript, November 20, 1914.

the effects of America's Protestant work ethic, described largely as a general discomfort and irritability, are illuminating:

> "…the capital and the wealthy squeeze people dry;"[93] "As you can see, there are actually opportunities to strike up acquaintances but I'm kind of reluctant to and, secondly, there isn't much time. [new par.] I don't read anything anymore;"[94] "I'm home alone again, didn't go to school. I've been feeling unusually tired lately;"[95] "I feel physically weak …I haven't been taking any drawing classes because I'm physically unable to;"[96] "I'm unsatisfied with myself again. I don't like people around me…My teacher is very pleased with me but I might have to leave her soon. It's a shame and I don't know why I feel this way…Overall I'm stuck on all fronts and I feel like I'm to blame… whatever."[97]

This experience stands out starkly against her writings from the Pale. Fishelov loses interest in the things that used to bring her joy, and she finds the work required of her at her jobs utterly unfulfilling. Though she herself did not write of creative textile production in the Pale, one can easily infer that others who did craft, like Frieda, would also not have had time to do so after arrival in the US. Her loss of gaiety and liveliness stands as a poignant commentary on the significant toll of the immigration process within American borders.

Jeanette Fishelov's narrative of her introduction into the US provides important insight into the environment experienced by immigrants of the Great Migration. In the Pale of Settlement, she is a student, primarily, with time enough after school to spend time with her family and collect her thoughts in a diary. She has enough energy from day to day to occasionally stay awake until midnight, exploring her family history (a topic unrelated to

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[93] Fishelov, *"Diary Volume II,"* November 28, 1914.

[94] Fishelov, *"Diary Volume II,"* December 6, 1914.

[95] Fishelov, *"Diary Volume II,"* January 10, 1915.

[96] Fishelov, *"Diary Volume II,"* January 10, 1915.

[97] Fishelov, *"Diary Volume II,"* May 31, 1915.

school or work) and simply experiencing quality time. In the US, she has increasingly less and less time do to so. Education becomes a privilege, to be focused on in between work hours, and the pressures from finding steady, paid employment as a minor in an unsteady, oversaturated market quickly drains her of energy. She struggles for motivation to participate in school and utterly loses the will to do any other activity she used to like, including even basic socializing. Fishelov herself liked to draw, and if she had liked to craft by hand, she would likely have ceased to do so. As Mary Antin's narrative shows, as do the interviews of the subsequent chapter, many of Fishelov's peers did enjoy crafting and may have been similarly prevented from doing so.

2.3 Skill Share Within Contemporary Journals

While Fishelov may not have made textiles by hand, her environment was saturated with them. Contemporary journals for women reflect this with articles written about textiles. In order to glean some insight as to whether first generation immigrants were learning new crafting skills in the US or primarily carried over skills they learned from family or from a European community, I looked to two American journals, one in Yiddish and one in English. The former is titled *Di Froyen Velt* (lit. Women's world*),* with an English title of *The Jewish Ladies Home Journal*. *Di Froyen Velt* ran between April 1, 1913 - March 15, 1914, first as a monthly and then as a weekly publication, based in New York.[98] It offered a regular "Styles and Fashions" section, consisting of two pages with three outfits each, depicted with drawings and written patterns beneath. Throughout the tenure of the magazine, patterns in any other technique besides sewing were not shared. Its regular presence demonstrates the continued prevalence of sewing as a dominant craft, because of the high need for clothing and the relatively high cost of pre-made items in department stores.

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[98] "The Jewish Ladies Home Journal," The National Library of Israel, n.d., https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/ladies.

These sections also present a site of Americanization with distinct instances of transliteration. The English title, "Styles and Fashions," is transliterated into Yiddish lettering, including the letter *i* in "Fashions," which is transliterated to the letter *yud.*[99] The presence of a *yud*, however, alters the pronunciation in Yiddish. The word *and* is written with the Yiddish *un (און)* becoming "*Sṭeyls Un Feshiyons" ("סטיילס און פעשיאָנס").* Each pattern's title was similarly transliterated: Semi-Princess Dress becomes "*Semi-Printses Dress*" *("סעמי־פרינצעס דרעסס")* instead of a possible translation using Yiddish words of *halb-dukse ḳleyd (האַלב־דוכסה קלייד).* The transliterated word *dress* also sometimes contained two of the letter *samekh*, for *s* sounds, as the English word does.[100] This is a clear sign of English influence, as standard Yiddish does not write those letters in duplicate. The "Styles and Fashions" section stood as a site for everyday living. It reflected the absorption of English among the community, as the presence of English words in a journal entirely safe from non-Jewish eyes indicate. It also influenced that absorption with its readership by transliterating certain words and not others.

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[99] Transliterations in this document follow the United States Library of Congress Hebrew and Yiddish romanization table.

[100] "Styles and Fashions," *The Jewish Ladies Home Journal* 1, no. 7 (November 1913): 10–11.

Figure 2: Styles and Fashions Section of *Di Froyen Velt.* "Semi-Princess Dress" can be seen at the top of the right column. Published November 1913.

The second journal, titled *The American Jewess,* ran earlier in time than *Di Froyen Velt*. It was the first publication for Jewish women in the United States, based in Chicago, and ran monthly from 1895-1899.[101] Scholar Dana Mihailescu writes that mainstream magazines of the day, such as the *Atlantic, Harper's, Century,* and *Scribner's,* shifted with the Great Migration from an original audience of an upper class readership to a broader audience of Eastern European immigrants with the open intent of inspiring "upward social and economic mobility."[102] *The American Jewess* restructured those goals, as the

[101] "The American Jewess," Jewish Women's Archive, May 27, 2020, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amjewess/index.html#more_info.

[102] Dana Mihailescu, ""American Jewess" and Turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century Gender Images," Jewish Women's Archive, n.d., https://jwa.org/article/american-jewess-and-turn-of-twentieth-century-gender-images.

magazine was written by Eastern European immigrants for their own community. Effectively, the magazine "balance[d] imitation of mainstream ways with alternative projects."[103] A magazine situated within such an explicit cultural fight for speedy Americanization offers a unique point of analysis for which kinds of crafts were valued enough to discuss publicly, in English, at the nexus of the twin desires of Americanization and cultural retention.

Above all, editors and readers of *The American Jewess* valued narrative. Almost all articles covering the subject of textiles focus more on general values, history, or a story, rather than the practicalities of material creation. "The Needle's Story," authored simply by "Dick.", tells a moral tale of choosing wisely for marriage from the perspective of a sewing needle, and not much at all about sewing.[104] "One Stitch At A Time," by Mabel Evans, uses stitching as a metaphor for spiritual and ethical living, with only a few references to textile stitching.[105] Both passages are written in a style strongly reminiscent of contemporary American writings on spirituality and morality, which were shifting from a Protestant context to the ostensibly non-religious secular humanism.[106] The secular humanist style stands out as remarkably different from stories written at the same time in the international Yiddish world, of which one primary nexus was New York, which carried an often irreverent and self-referential tone.[107] The code-switching toward a more serious religiosity commonly accompanied the use of English and can also be seen in Mary Antin's book. Back in Polotsk, Antin writes of her childhood games, "I am afraid I liked everything that was a little risky. I particularly enjoyed being the corpse in a Gentile

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[103] Mihailescu, ""American Jewess" and Turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century Gender Images."

[104] Dick., "The Needle's Story," *The American Jewess* 2, no. 6 (March 1896): 301–2.

[105] Mabel Evans, "One Stitch at a Time," *The American Jewess* 6, no. 2 (November 1897): 82.

[106] Phillip E. Hammond, "In Search of a Protestant Twentieth Century: American Religion and Power Since 1900," Review of Religious Research 24, no. 4 (June 1983): 284-285.

[107] Harshav, Binyamin. *The Meaning of Yiddish*. Repr. [der Ausg.] Univ. of California Press 1990. Contraversions. Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999, 106-107.

funeral,"[108] and as a young adult in Boston, "I must not fail to testify that in America a child of the slums owns the land and all that is good in it… I did not need to seek my kingdom. I had only to be worthy…"[109] Though both passages are in English, Antin records a change in communal demeanor. In Eastern Europe, one can act out scenes of death in the street; in the US, one sees stateliness and simplistic goodness in the world.

The "London and Paris Fashions" section appears regularly in the monthly issues and, in contrast to the previous two stories, offers considerable detail about the clothing it discusses. The articles are almost all authored by an Annie Laurie Yuill and instruct readers on fashionable types, cuts, and combinations of cloth, as well as the best times at which to wear them. The articles are several pages each, with drawings to illustrate the fashions discussed. As quite a number of specific materials, designs, and colors are covered in each article, the drawings are never sufficient and the reader's ability to skillfully design her own clothing based loosely on the descriptions Yuill offers is assumed.[110] The article provides layered messaging of aspirations toward Western Europe as an upper-class American value, or perhaps an international one. The great trust Yuill has in her readers' ability to understand cloth, and the discussion of how clothing items fit together to create fashion without referring readers to specific stores, allows them to achieve a certain look without necessarily needing money to do so. Even for those who could afford to purchase such looks pre-made, doing so requires a certain level of knowledge of cloth and sewing to reproduce.

Finally, the January issue of 1898 contains a 6-page article by Arrabel Leftwich titled "Point Lace," complete with a photo on almost every page. The article describes point

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[108] Antin, *The Promised Land,* 86.

[109] Antin, *The Promised Land*, 279.

[110] For example, see the January 1898 issue (Volume 6, No. 4), 182-185.

lace as "the airy substance…fashioned laboriously by the needle, stitch by stitch"[111] and the process of creating it as an "art."[112] In addition to outlining the history of point lace, Leftwich promotes making lace to her readers. She cites the value of handmade point lace for women of limited means, because of how long it lasts in comparison to machine lace. Having point lace can also distract from plain outfits or renew outfits that have been worn many times. Leftwich offers information on types of point lace – Venetian, Burano, English, and the French point d'Alencon. She also describes a rare and highly valued "ecclesiastical lace, usually Italian" for which one can find very similar imitations for much cheaper. To finish, she offers a method for cleaning lace, to preserve it further.[113] Like Yuill, Leftwich offers readers a pathway to contemporary elegance, or rather, the opportunity to appear upwardly mobile, while acknowledging the limited means of most of the readership. Someone with knowledge of how to make other kinds of laces might choose to do only a little further research and make a piece herself; others might choose to purchase a small piece because of the promised long-term savings. The article also emphasizes the value of lace, matching Mary Antin's story, and the extensive details themselves provide another instance of craft knowledge sharing.

Of note, the May issue of 1899, published in Chicago, contains a short article on a young, Boston-based Mary Antin. It references a "storiette" of hers about her overseas passage published in "The American Hebrew," "The Jewish Daily News," and "The Jewish Gazette." Apparently, the story "at once became the literary sensation of the hour in Jewish circles,"[114] demonstrating both the interconnectedness of the Jewish community in the US and the resonance of Antin's story with many other Jewish immigrants. Furthermore, if news from Boston made it quickly over to Chicago, it increases the

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[111] Arrabel Leftwich, "Point Lace," *The American Jewess* 6, no. 4 (January 1898): 166.

[112] Arrabel Leftwich, "Point Lace," *The American Jewess* 6, no. 4 (January 1898): 166 and 167.

[113] Arrabel Leftwich, "Point Lace," *The American Jewess* 6, no. 4 (January 1898): 165-171.

[114] Chaya Frumes, "Mary Antin," *The American Jewess* 9, no. 4 (May 1899): 9–10.

likelihood that many immigrants, whether in New York or Chicago, were able to access these journals and the discussions within.

The textile materials portrayed in *Di Froyen Velt* and *The American Jewess* stand out as remarkably different from those recorded by Mary Antin. In both periodicals, clothing – or rather, textiles that can be worn – is the primary point of interest. Whereas Mary Antin discusses textiles generally for the home, the journals discuss fashion only. Furthermore, the clothing discussed in Antin's autobiography is couched within a long-term context: the wedding gown, the bedspread, the singular satin dress and velvet cloak. In the "Styles and Fashions" and "London and Paris Fashions" sections, new outfits are portrayed each issue at a pace that could only be matched by a professional seamstress if she had hardly any clients – or, alternatively, by machine production. As most of the readers were not seamstresses with little else to do, these fashion sections create a different environment than that of Polotsk in which clothes became more casual, and therefore more easily replaced. If clothes need regular replacement to keep up with fashions, purchasing them makes more sense, as the time involved in making them by hand becomes no longer worth the effort. Subtler messages like these may have contributed to the deference to machine-made items, which the interviews will show reverberated for decades after these journals were in print.

Something additionally unique to these fashion sections was the unabashed focus on textiles for adult women. The interviews will later show an enormous reticence among almost all participants and their ancestors to make anything for themselves. Readers of fashion sections in women's periodicals, however, could spend considerable time reading and subsequently making or purchasing items specifically for themselves. The patterns offered in *Di Froyen Velt* typically had 5 dresses for adult women, one for a child (alternating for girls and boys between issues), and none at all for men. "London and Paris Fashions" described outfits and fabrics often out of reach for many readers, and instead perhaps created a space for personal dreams and play. "Point Lace" also operated largely in the dream space, under the guise of the practicality that small bits of

lace could distract from old outfits, and spent considerable time discussing a fabric which served no other purpose besides beauty. Though individual reactions to these articles cannot be known, perhaps, like the Russian lace in *The Promised Land,* they allowed some readers to beautify their own lives simply for pleasure's sake.

2.4 The *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition

In practicality, most textiles women made by hand were for general use in the home. The *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition highlighted the immense variety of such production and the skill of those who did so. The exposition offered a pamphlet to attendees listing every craft item on display (e.g., "Pillow Case–Embroidered"), as well as the names of the donors, their addresses, and the country from which the item originated.[115] The pamphlet cites some 158 separate handmade textile items and offers a great level of insight into the nature of skill at the time. When cross-referenced with the descriptions of craft from Mary Antin's autobiography, Jeanette Fishelov's diary, and, later on, testimonies from the interviews, an even fuller picture reveals itself. The items listed in the pamphlet match the environment described in *The Promised Land* and from the fair Fishelov attended, as well as the items described in the interviews as pre-dating 1950. Because of the practical nature of the pamphlet, the list identifies considerably more detail about handcraft than narrative or an individual family's heirlooms can do. Its preservation reveals important information about the culture and the period.

The greatest number of items – 69% - came from "Russia," whose borders included the Pale of Settlement. The Pale of Settlement stretched from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south, and encompassed parts of modern-day Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, Moldavia, and Russia's current borders,[116] and did not include

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[115] Jewish Settlement House, ed., "Jews of Many Lands Exposition Pamphlet" (Dunie Printing Co, January 18, 1913), Hebrew Union College.

[116] "Modern Jewish History: Pale of Settlement."

Romania or Hungary, which are also listed separately in the document. To analyze the crafts listed as Russian with great geographic or cultural specificity is impossible from this list; however, it does offer insight into the culture of the Pale, within which Jewish residents were connected through a commonality in language (Yiddish, spoken by 99% of Jewish residents there in 1897)[117] and the governmental restrictions of Czarist Russia.

To recall, Jeanette Fishelov wrote a short list, in Russia in 1913, of the handmade textile items she saw at the fair: "a variety of handicraft items: embroidered towels, dresses, napkins, tablecloths, carpets, and so on." Mary Antin describes of her family's former finery "upholstered parlors, embroidered linen" and fabrics of "velvet, silk, and fine woolen," as well as her mother's crocheted challah cover and bedspread trim, satin dress, and velvet cloak. As a child Mary wound and worsted yarn, and later knit herself, described much embroidery in the environment, and mentioned that in "country places" people spun and wove by hand as well. At the *Jews of Many Lands* Exposition, the textile items from Russia include: embroidered towels (6), a set of two embroidered napkins and one linen napkin, and tablecloths (10), as well as embroidered scarves (17), various bed linens including sheets and pillowcases, many of which are embroidered (13), doilies including three knitted ones (8), "embroidered pieces" (7), and several individual items of clothing, including two tallises, one set of *tzitzis* (knotted strings of the tallis), and knitted stockings (21).[118] Fishelov's note about the "great variety" she saw in a Russian craft fair certainly applies to these Russian items. By comparison, the much shorter Romanian and Hungarian lists contain far less variety (though we cannot know why; it may simply be that there were fewer submissions overall). Embroidery remains the dominant craft for display, suggesting an even greater dominance of sewing in the home. Knitting is present in small numbers, consistent with the frequency of Antin's descriptions of craftwork in Polotsk. Crocheting is not mentioned, though some of the simply titled "doilies" may

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[117] "Modern Jewish History: Pale of Settlement."

[118] Jewish Settlement House, "Jews of Many Lands Exposition Pamphlet," 18-38.

have been crocheted; this speaks to the rarity of use of that particular craft. The tallises stand out. At least one was woven, as the donor took care to point out that the "original weaver [was] killed in Kishineff Pogrow." It's unclear whether the original weaver lived in a more remote area or if tallises were woven by hand, even in urban areas, because of their religious significance.

Hungary and Romania had a similar number of submissions – 22 and 25, respectively. Almost the entirety of the Hungarian pieces were embroidered (19), ranging across a wide variety of items: tablecloths, night gowns, aprons, napkins, and simply "embroidered pieces,"[119] suggesting aesthetic design for domestic ornamentation. Romanian pieces were also largely embroidered (11), with the distinct addition of 9 pieces of handmade lace and one drawn work center piece.[120] With the exception of one drawn work submission from Hungary, no other lace pieces were submitted to the exposition, including from Russia, whose immigrants might have had some knowledge of bobbin lace as demonstrated by Mary Antin. Among the twelve interviewees, there was also one drawn work lace piece submitted from Hungary. The descendants of the maker of that piece say the borders shifted between Hungary and Romania in that area, and that the maker spoke Hungarian. This data suggests a connection between Hungary, Romania, and lace during this period. This data also supports the argument that craft is locally influenced and that intercommunal knowledge exchange occurred. Were Yinger's theory to be applied to Eastern Europe, these exchanges could be considered part of an assimilation and dissimilation process in which the community actively selects which aspects of the hegemonic culture to absorb.

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[119] Jewish Settlement House, "Jews of Many Lands Exposition Pamphlet," 18-38.

[120] Jewish Settlement House, "Jews of Many Lands Exposition Pamphlet," 18-38.

2.5 The Turn of the 20th Century: A Needs-Based Craft Economy

From all these sources appears a clear picture of necessity as the primary driver of craft endeavors, for Eastern European immigrants both before their emigration and in the United States after their arrival. Sewing existed as the most commonly employed craft, followed by embellishments of those crafts with embroidery. Knitting was used similarly as it is today, for warmth in the winter, primarily through socks, and was considered entirely separate from crochet. Crocheting was considered a luxury, not necessarily taught to girls as part of their future matronly duties and utterly separate from knitting. It was included with other ornamental-oriented techniques, such as bobbin lace and drawn work, under the larger category of lace. As the interviews will later show, this creative environment is distinctly different than that of the second generation's and defining it fully provides a historical record and allows for a better understanding of how it eventually changes.

Within this needs-based, two-tiered craft hierarchy exhibited by the primary sources in this chapter, there also lies a particular understanding of lace. Unlike sewing, embroidery, and knitting, lace crafts were often referred to as art. Mary Antin did so several times in her descriptions of Russian bobbin lace and *The American Jewess* article "Point Lace" does as well. As I discussed in the introduction, Glenn Adamson references Theodor Adorno's definition of art as both not-craft and, also, "anything." Adamson goes on to define craft as distinctly separate from art, rather than as a lesser version of art, as it has historically been defined.[121] Later on, however, Adamson situates craft firmly within cultural boundaries, citing that the definition of what counts as skill changes between communities and thus craft functions as cultural expression.[122] If anything can be defined as art, and "craft" means cultural expression but is distinct from art, lace sits at a

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[121] Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft,* 2-3.

[122] Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft,* 78.

crossroads. It was created for the purposes of elevating the aesthetics of the home environment – for its beauty – and yet it was done within the specific rules of its technique, as craft does. Most importantly, lace was defined as art *within the culture in which it was made*, effectively rendering it both a craft and an art, by Glenn Adamson's definition.

According to Adamson, the question of whether or not something is art is a "simplistic formulation" that "one must first dispense with."[123] However, I believe Adamson's theory of craft crucially misses a deeper engagement with specific cultural histories, despite defining craft as representative of culture. Clare Wilkinson-Weber and Alicia DeNicola underscore craft's inseparability from culture. Moving craft away from the local – for example, Romanian lace – and towards the universal – lace or even simply "craft" – merely moves it from one cultural specific to another.[124] Segmenting craft into the more natural categories of technique connected to their places of origin, as with the example of Romanian lace, allows for a rich understanding of creative output without the need for historically anachronistic definitions. Rozsika Parker suggests that embroidery similarly blurs the distinction between art and craft, because of the way it so easily allows for imagery.[125] By including items like lace made by hand for the purposes of beauty that were also defined as art at the time of their making – notably not sewed or knitted items –reduces Western and male dominance in discussions and definitions of art and allows for a greater diversity of cultural understanding within the field.

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[123] Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft,* 2.

[124] Wilkinson-Weber and DeNicola, *Critical Craft*, 7.

[125] Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, 6.

Chapter 3

3 The Interviews

In keeping with the biographical focus of this thesis, I conducted interviews of descendants of Eastern European immigrants, within either the first or second generation, to glean information about the actual oeuvres of immigrants. Each handcrafted item that was mentioned in the interviews has been recorded, along with the national origin of the maker and the approximate time it was made, resulting in a picture of a century's worth of textiles. For a complete chart with the items and biographic details of their makers, please refer to Appendix 1.

When I began the interviews, I expected to find a family lineage of craft knowledge, passed down matrilineally. Instead, like the context discussed in Chapter 2, I found that the style and amount of hand production matched the era in which an item was produced, across generations, regardless of country of origin or ancestral knowledge. Many interviewees recalled learning skills at young or very young ages from either their parent or grandmother; many also recalled learning skills from classes or books. Often times, interest in craft skipped a generation. Though women had access to craft knowledge from their mothers, "it didn't take" or they chose not to engage with it; later, their daughters would learn these skills from their grandmothers. Whether or not a particular generation took up textile work coincided with the popularity of textile crafts at their time of adolescence.

Furthermore, immigrant women *changed what they made* in accordance with national trends in the nation in which they were residing pre- and post-migration. For example, most interviewees identified an ancestor (usually a grandmother) as having learned sewing, embroidery, knitting, and sometimes crocheting in Eastern Europe. Most interviewees did not mention white lace heirlooms as being made after 1945. However, almost every interviewee mentioned afghans first and primarily in connection with their

immigrant ancestor, even though all but two of the afghans were made after 1960. All of the ancestors had the craft knowledge with which to make an afghan dating back to the 1910s or earlier, but they did not do so until the national trend appeared in the 1960s.

The strong correlation of craft with social trends is often hidden when crafters speak about their work. Crafters in the study strongly associated crafted items with personal life events – girlhood, bat mitzvahs, moments in friendship, weddings, pregnancies, etc. Individualized factors drove the creation of handcraft. However, the timing and type of craft remained consistent with decade-based trends.

Crafters, notably, learned their preferred skills from outside their family networks. Many interviewees reported learning basic knowledge of their mothers' and grandmothers' skills. The ancestors of the interviewees also reported learning at least the basics through matrilineal lines. For example, most of the participants, regardless of generation, knew how to sew repairs. Those who reached adulthood in the 1950s or later, however, did not sew much beyond that. Many had access to knowledge of sewing, embroidery, knitting, and crocheting from their older relatives but only retained or pursued those skills popular in the decade of their adolescence. Several crafters were self-taught and broadened their childhood knowledge with books to achieve the styles and techniques of their time. Women crafting in the 1960s made afghans; women crafting in the 1980s crocheted *kippot* (head coverings, traditionally for men). This chapter is thus organized by craft era, as defined by the patterns and specific items mentioned by the twelve participants. The stories and memories carried by these textiles are woven within each section.

All interviewees were either first or second-generation Chicagoans, with direct ancestors on at least one side of the family who migrated from Eastern Europe between 1882 and 1924. I define "first-generation" as both immigrants who were born outside of the United States and the children of those immigrants. Participants were recruited for the study by word of mouth and by emails sent to every synagogue listed on the website of Chicago's Jewish United Fund, whose list includes synagogues of the Reconstructionist, Reform,

Conservative, Traditional, Orthodox, and Non-Denominational movements. Synagogues were told about the study and asked to include information about it in their weekly emails to members. Not all synagogues agreed to promote the study. Those who voluntarily responded to emails from participating synagogues or who heard about the study through word of mouth were interviewed. Interviewees who opted for anonymity are referred to by their Hebrew/Yiddish names followed by "Anonymous." Participants are identified by their first names; their ancestors are referred to by their full name, last name, or qualifiers such as "grandmother." All ancestor names included in this thesis are written with the permission of the interviewees, including those of some anonymous participants. No empirical conclusions can be drawn from the data because of the small sample size; rather, this thesis assembles patterns in the available data and offers a basis for future research. References to patterns or trends in this chapter refer to those patterns among the data and not in the larger United States unless otherwise noted.

3.1 Needs-Based Craft: Pre-1950

As the primary sources illuminated in Chapter 2, needs-based craft constituted a two-tier system. The first tier consists of the more common techniques of sewing and knitting, used for practical purposes of daily use. Embroidery was common as well, as a natural adornment of the already prevalent sewed items. The second tier consists of techniques less commonly found, such as crochet and many varieties of lace. The crafted heirlooms dating prior to 1950 remain consistent with this hierarchy. A great number of items were sewn, and several were embroidered. A few participants also mentioned knitted sweaters. Crocheted items were always white and always open-work lace designed to elevate the aesthetic beauty of a particular room. These came in either in the form of doilies or very large cloth, such as a bedspread or tablecloth. They were not created as items that served to keep the body warm, like sweaters or afghans. Sewed items will be discussed first and crocheted items will be discussed along with other white lace in the next section.

Photos, rather than the materials themselves, serve to elongate the memory of family textiles in this era, as many of the original makers are no longer around to tell the stories of the fabrics. This is the case with Ellen Goldman Kanter, whose maternal grandmother, Ida Patosky Tenner, was known as a great sewer. Tenner immigrated in 1914 at the age of 21. She died suddenly when Ellen's mother, Shirley Tenner Goldman, was 18 years old. Due to her death, all of her pieces can be dated before 1941.[126]

Ellen has five photographs of her grandmother, treasured by her mother and eventually passed down to her. Grandmother Ida Tenner used to make a new dress for her daughter Goldman for every occasion, and these old photographs record both the occasion and the handiwork. They show Shirley Goldman in two sewn dresses, one knitted shrug, and one sweater or sweater-dress (technique unknown). An earlier photograph of Ida Tenner shows her posing in a white blouse and black skirt, believed by Ellen to be of Tenner's own making.[127] These five dresses alone show the breadth of Tenner's skill and, like Frieda's dresses for Mary Antin, underscore the meaning of each event for both the maker and the wearer. Frieda spared no expense in the dresses she made for Mary and carefully pored over every stitch in what can only be described as a labor of love; the time and effort required for five dresses shows the care and affection Ida Tenner had for her daughter.

Ellen's family has only a single outfit made by her grandmother's hand: a child's peasant costume, originally made for Shirley Goldman and later used by various descendants. The outfit consists of several pieces: a calico skirt and a white half apron, a white blouse with a floral blue cloth stripe on the sleeves framed by red bands (presumably to imitate an embroidered arm band) and a full-length, undyed cloth dress, possibly for an

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[126] Ellen Goldman Kanter, interview by Author, Zoom, May 6, 2021.

[127] Goldman Kanter, interview.

undergarment.[128] Ida Tenner was originally from The Pale and these garments offer a memory and imitation of local peasantry, both made real and altered by the materials she had at hand. Just as Mary Antin preserved her memories through writing, so did Ida Tanner preserve hers through cloth.

Figure 3: Two pieces of Ida Tenner's Peasant Costume. Completed in the early 1930s.

The family of Sarah Sheina Anonymous has many sewed and knitted items from the pre-1950 era. Sarah Sheina's maternal grandfather, Dave Morris, immigrated from Dobryzn, Poland in 1911 at the age of 17. He worked as a tailor who designed clothes.[129] Morris made many clothes for his family to wear, in addition to the work he did professionally. He made slacks for his children, and later, grandchildren. Sarah Sheina remembers the slacks he made for her and her jealousy of her classmates, who wore store-bought jeans. Grandfather Morris also made her a winter coat. Morris' daughter and Sarah Sheina's mother, Estelle Preis of Chicago, made a red knit jumper for a very young Sarah Sheina in

[128] Goldman Kanter, interview.

129 Sarah Sheina differentiated designing tailors from tailors who primarily mended.

the early 40's. Photos of the handmade slacks and the jumper extend the memory of those items beyond their lifespan.[130]

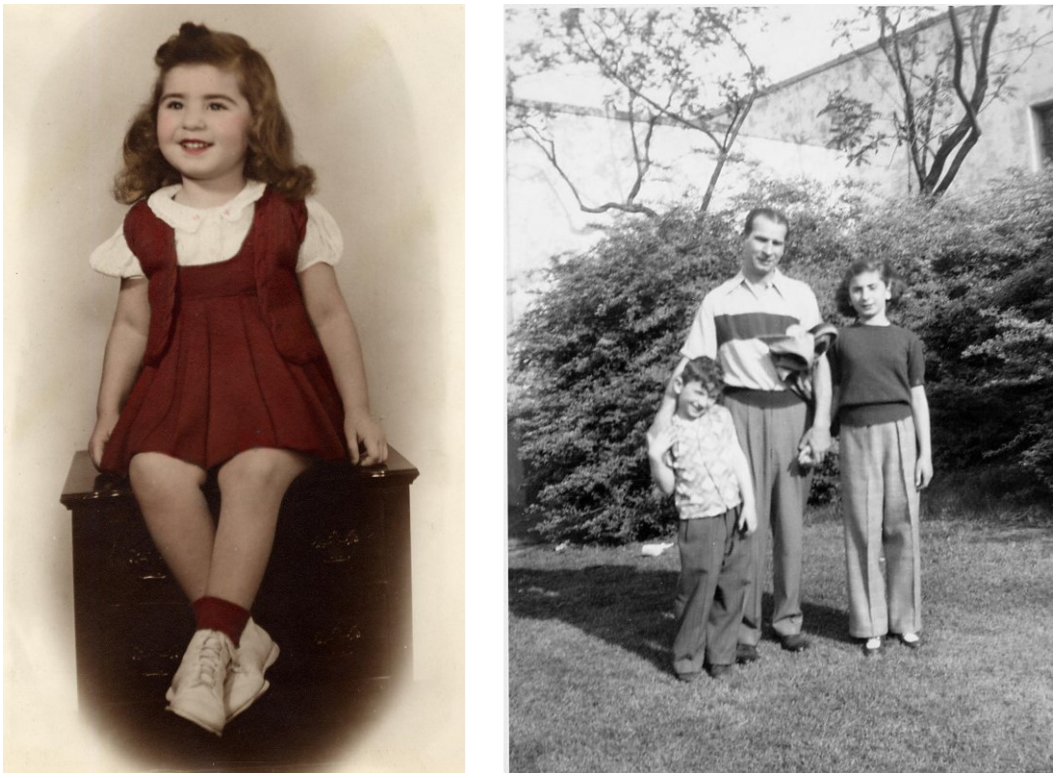

Figure 4: Left: Sarah Sheina in the Red Knit Jumper made by her mother. Right: Sarah Sheina's family in slacks made by her grandfather.

Sarah Sheina also produced her first crafted items during the 40s: a sewn potholder and apron. She made them in sewing classes at a nearby church and eventually learned more skills in a 1950s Home Economics class. She did not learn sewing skills from her grandfather, who, despite his talent, strongly disliked sewing and would sew at home only when necessity dictated it. Estelle Preis also learned sewing by taking classes, and while she did much crafting during her lifetime, she did not sew except for repairs. Sarah Sheina does not know where her grandfather learned his craft or how. She does know

[130] Sarah Sheina Anonymous, interview by Author, Zoom, June 14, 2021.

that Morris' father made *tefilin* (prayer boxes bound to the body with leather straps) as a leather-worker.[131] As a leather worker, Morris' father likely did not teach him to sew. Three generations in Sarah Sheina's family learned textile skills, and all three likely learned them from outside the family.[132]

Sewn items continue to dominate the types of heirlooms participants have from before 1950. The following are some additional examples of the sewing tradition prior to 1950. Zelda Freeman's mother, Dora Stone of Vilna, Lithuania, sewed her daughter two nightgowns of blue satin and white lace trim for her trousseau in 1948. Dora Stone, a seamstress, immigrated from Vilna, Lithuania at age 16. Zelda, who is 95 years old, still has the dresses in her possession.[133] Participant Basha Chavah Anonymous' mother immigrated in 1930 with a plain sewn pillowcase made for her by her mother in Sokolow Pavlovski, Poland, where it was a tradition to make a pillowcase for daughters upon their marriage.[134] (Basha Chava qualified for the study because her father immigrated in 1921.)

White Lace

One family, of interviewees and sisters Chaya Rifka and Masha Anonymous, produced many lace pieces, which I was able to examine more closely than the sewed items due to better photographs. They were all created by Chaya Rifka and Masha's maternal grandmother, Ida Radwolsky Porter of Russia, with the exception of one cutwork doily made by their paternal grandmother, Regina Strohli Lucas, of Hungary. Each piece is

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[131] Anonymous [Sarah Sheina], interview.

[132] Anonymous [Sarah Sheina], interview.

[133] Zelda Freeman, interview by Author, Zoom, May 4, 2021.

[134] Basha Chava Anonymous, interview by Author, Zoom, May 12, 2021.

white or off-white and dates to before 1945. Each piece was done with a different technique, indicating Porter's range of skill.[135]

One of Porter's pieces is a circular cutwork doily, with a border of floral designs culminating in two large flowers at the top. The center remains plain white cloth, inviting the placement of a vase or dish were it set on a table. Another is a square doily of drawn work, with a cloth X in the center framed by a diamond cloth border. Evenly distributed are layered chevrons, embroidered in white thread, accentuated by four drawn work squares at the center. The X and the diamond are framed entirely by drawn work mesh. The piece has rough, unfinished edges, as if it were cut out of the original cloth, and small bits of uneven cloth shapes at the edges hint at a larger design. A third piece is a large crocheted doily, with smaller half-pineapples at the center and larger half-pineapples at the outer edges, connected by a mesh pattern. Porter also created most of a bedspread using the crocheted popcorn stitch in connected hexagons. The piece remains unfinished. A single heirloom remains from paternal grandmother Regina Lucas: a small, square doily of drawn work. An inner square of drawn mesh surrounds a geometric flower of rectangles and diamonds, also decorated with white embroidered chevrons. The outer border has one strip of drawn threads amidst the white cloth, and the threads are more relaxed than the those of the mesh.[136] Though the makers are different, one from Russia and the other from Hungary, the pieces carry the distinctive style of the white lace of the time. Most participants had minimal knowledge of pieces pre-dating 1950, so whether the sewn or lace items were made in Europe or the United States is unknown. Further research into the styles distinctive to each region at the time may allow further insight into where these items might have been made.

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[135] Chaya Rifka Anonymous, interview by Author, Zoom, June 18, 2021; Masha Anonymous, interview by Author, May 12, 2021.

[136] Anonymous [Chaya Rifka], interview; Anonymous [Masha], interview.

Figure 5: Left: Ida Porter's Drawn Work. Completed before 1945. Right: Regina Lucas' Drawn Work. Completed before 1940.

Ida Porter and her daughter, Grace Porter Lucas, embroidered a large tablecloth for playing bridge which combines several different techniques. The white cloth has two concentric squares in the center, outlined in blue cross stitch. The larger square is surrounded by a large, intricate vine pattern with large, multi-colored flowers at each corner, all in cross stitch. The outer edge of the central section of the tablecloth has a blue cross stitch geometric border with the same flower design at each corner. Lucas and Porter incorporate drawn work inside the central squares, at the outer corners, and as the outline distinguishing the center section from the thick outer border. This border is a textured, quilted design of triangles and swirls with white thread. Mother and daughter designed the piece themselves, along with a matching napkin set.[137] The piece shows an enormous range of skill - an amalgam of varied and finely detailed cross-stitch technique featuring colorful floral and geometric patterns. This style of tablecloth will serve as a comparison point with future cross stitch tablecloths.

[137] Anonymous [Chaya Rifka], interview; Anonymous [Masha], interview.

Figure 6: Ida Porter and Grace Lucas' Bridge Tablecloth. Left: Embroidery and drawn work detail. Top right: Center embroidery pattern. Matching napkin can be seen on the right. Bottom center: Embroidery detail. Bottom right: Quilted outer border. Completed before 1945.

Participant Renee Werner described a lace piece in her family from the pre-1950 time period. She remembers a large, white, crocheted lace tablecloth always on the table at her grandmother's home. The tablecloth consisted of connected squares, each with four open pineapples stemming from a center circle. Her paternal grandmother, Lena Klein, immigrated from Rajgród, Poland in 1908 at age 16. Renee does not know much about the piece other than that it was present in her grandmother's home by the time of her childhood in the 1940s.[138] The squares seem to foreshadow afghans to come twenty years later.

[138] Renee Werner, interview by Author, Zoom, May 10, 2021.

Figure 7: Lena Klein's Crocheted Lace Tablecloth in Full and Close-up. Completed before the 1950s.

3.2 Transition Phase: 1950s

From the available data, crafted items from the 1950s on showed a subtle shift in motivation. The ratio of sewed, embroidered, and knitted items remain similar to those dated before 1950; however, the types of items made altered slightly, as did the reasons for making them. Several participants mention homemade doll clothes, sometimes including tiny knitted squares serving as doll afghans; mentions of sweaters increase from the previous decades and the dresses described are almost always associated with special occasions (with the exception of Sarah Sheina's grandfather Morris, who continued to sew clothing for his family for everyday wear, to Sarah Sheina's chagrin.)[139] Most items were associated with special occasions, as if their makers started reserving

[139] Anonymous [Sarah Sheina], interview.

their creative energy for notable projects, rather than the everyday. Girlhood, in general, seemed to warrant specially directed creativity as its own special occasion.

Chaya Rifka's mother, Grace Porter Lucas of Chicago, made her daughter a number of doll outfits. Chaya Rifka, also of Chicago, took great pleasure in designing and sewing clothes for her dolls, too. She learned sewing and design from Lucas, who was a homemaker and enjoyed these crafts, as well as her (Chaya Rifka's) maternal grandfather Abraham Porter, who was a tailor and a furrier. Porter, whose Russian name was Portnoy, meaning tailor, immigrated from Russia around 1908 and lived with Chaya Rifka's family for a period during her childhood in the 1950s. Chaya Rifka remembers making a doll jacket with fur collar, though she has no recollection of how she obtained the fur.[140] Textiles were simply a part of Chaya Rifka's environment and influenced her creative process.

Lucas knew how to sew, likely because of her father Abraham Porter, but she only did so when she wanted to, not out of necessity. She also embroidered and crocheted, skills she learned from her mother. She did not knit. Lucas taught herself taught petit point and subsequently upholstered the seat and backing of a chair with her new skill sometime before 1948. The chair remains in her daughter Masha's possession. Masha had access to all this craft knowledge. She does not craft herself and instead found herself interested in other activities. Chaya Rifka, who hit adolescence in the 1960s, loves to craft. She learned how to sew from her mother Lucas and grandmother Ida Porter but prefers knitting and crocheting. She learned knitting in the 1950s, largely self-taught after two relatives tried to teach her but lived too far away to provide regular instruction. She made her first knit sweater during this time.[141]

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[140] Anonymous [Chaya Rifka], interview.

[141] Anonymous [Chaya Rifka], interview.

Figure 8: Ida Porter's Popcorn Bedspread underneath her Rose Crocheted Throw, with Grace Lucas' Petit Point chair in the background. Closer views are underneath. Bedspread and throw completed prior to 1945. Petit point completed before 1948.

Shoshana Anonymous was born in Chicago in 1946. She is a granddaughter of Dora Stone and niece of Zelda Freeman. Though Zelda does not do craftwork, Shoshana enjoyed crafting as a child and learned from grandmother Stone. She recalls the doll dresses of her childhood made by her grandmother's hand. Stone created an entire wardrobe of dresses for Shoshana, which she arranged on hangers inside of a trunk, "like the old travel chests that that people took on steamers."[142]

Shoshana valued that trunk of dresses so much she made one for her own daughter, 30 years later in 1980 – without patterns, she noted specifically. Shoshana learned sewing on a treadle machine from Stone, who never used patterns. Shoshana learned how to

[142] Shoshana Anonymous, interview by Author, Zoom, May 24, 2021.

sew with patterns in Home Economics at school and actively distinguishes sewed items she designed herself from the others made from patterns, because different techniques are required when working without a pattern. Stone was famous within the family for buying dresses from Marshall Field's – the height of fashion at the time – and returning the dresses a day or two later. Then she would make a similar dress herself for her daughters at lower cost. For her 13th birthday (celebrated as a birthday, not a bat mitzvah, because of the Orthodox practices of her synagogue), Shoshana pointed out a dress from a pattern book and Stone, without using the pattern, "whipped up" the dress. Once, in 1951 or 1952, Stone made matching dresses for Shoshana and her mother Irene. Irene did not craft much herself, though she had access to the crafting knowledge of the very proficient Stone. Irene was born in 1919 and reached adulthood in the 1940s, a decade with relatively fewer crafted items, a factor which may have influenced her interest in textiles.[143]

Participant Devorah Anonymous' grandmother, of Ukraine, made her doll purses during Devorah's childhood in the 50s. Devorah used to watch her make these purses in a mere half hour, mesmerized. Devorah's grandmother immigrated between 1912 and 1914 while in her early twenties. She learned sewing, knitting, and crocheting in Europe. Before immigrating, she worked as a seamstress, and in the US, she worked as a sample maker. Her husband took her work on the road as a traveling salesman. Like Dora Stone, Devorah's grandmother could look at a drawing and create a dress from the image. Devorah remembers that her grandmother didn't often make things for herself or sew all the clothes for her family, but reserved her creative energy to make dresses for special circumstances, like that of her granddaughter's girlhood. She make a velvet dress especially for Devorah around 1955 for a big family celebration. The quality of the dress was demonstrated when Devorah was allowed to wear it to High Holiday services at her grandmother's synagogue a few weeks before the family celebration. To ensure its

[143] Anonymous [Shoshana], interview.

preservation for the event, and in a clear affirmation of the value of the dress, Devorah was under strict instructions to put it on immediately before leaving the house and remove it immediately upon return, with no stops allowed along the walk to or from synagogue.[144]

Devorah learned some of her craft skills from her grandmother and both her parents. Her grandmother taught her and her cousin knitting, which she later learned was in continental style, more common in Europe than the English style used in the US. Her mother enrolled her in a knitting class at the local JCC (Jewish Community Center) at 7 years old. After returning home, she often took her work upstairs to her grandmother's apartment to practice. Devorah learned how to sew by watching her father sew at night, when he was attending pattern making school. Devorah's mother, of Chicago, learned crocheting from her mother, Devorah's grandmother. She did not craft frequently and often left projects unfinished, at which point Devorah's grandmother would usually complete them. She did start and finish a yellow crocheted blanket for the birth of Devorah's sister in 1955, which her sister still has in her possession.[145]

Of distinction within Devorah's family heirlooms is a hairpin lace shawl, made for her grandmother by her grandmother's sister.[146] This shawl is made of white thread on the main strips, of which the loops are gathered in groups to form waves, characteristic of hairpin lace. The strips, which run lengthwise across the shawl, are connected with silver lamé thread. Tassels frame the shorter edges. The use of white thread for a lace piece fits with the style of lace from before 1940; the thicker gauge of the thread and the use of crochet lace for a garment intended to be worn more closely matches with the style of crafts in the 1960s and 1970s. The impracticality of lace, which depends on negative

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[144] Devorah Anonymous, interview by Author, Zoom, May 6, 2021.

[145] Anonymous [Devorah], interview.

[146] Anonymous [Devorah], interview.

space to achieve its aesthetic, for a garment intended for warmth is a further indication of fashion as a primary motivation of the shawl – in other words, desire, rather than necessity. A final note of interest is that maker of the shawl spoke Yiddish primarily.[147] As her English was never fluent, it was unlikely she was reading English journals. Chances are high, therefore, that she learned the technique in Ukraine; if she learned hairpin lace in the US, it may have been from a Yiddish journal or an individual. Further research is needed into the presence of hairpin lace in Ukraine and the US at the turn of the 20th century.

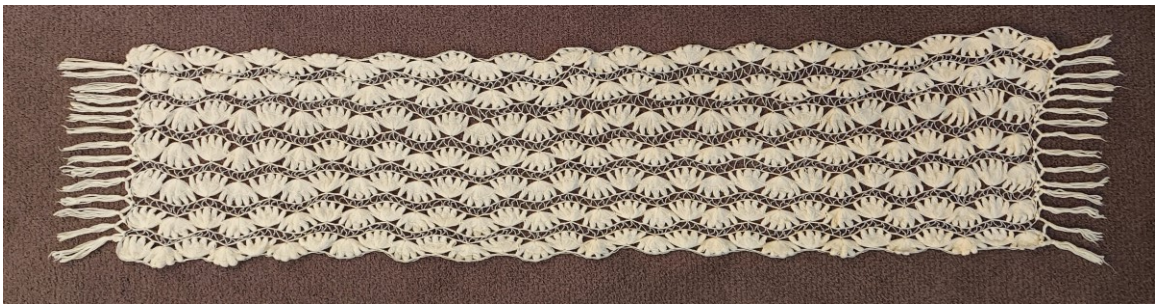

Figure 9: Devorah's Grandmother's Hairpin Lace Shawl. Completed around 1955.

3.3 Desire-Based Craft: 1960-Onwards

From the 1960s onwards, knitting and crocheting replaced sewing as the most common craft techniques and almost all projects were born out of creative interest. The style of crocheting changed from white lace of very thin gauge cottons to worn items such as afghans, purses, scarves, and kippot of much thicker gauges and yarn of animal fibers, often intended for warmth. Sewing projects were sometimes done out of a hybrid desire-necessity model: several interviewees mentioned a preference for purchasing machine items. They sewed certain items only after discovering the desired textile was not available to buy. The 1970s saw the introduction of the craft kit, in which a machine

147 Anonymous [Devorah], interview.

provided a design for the crafter to follow. Many used the kits as introductions to a new technique, which allowed the crafter to learn on her own without needing a relative or a class. Kits also aided with items that were difficult to design, like detailed needlepoint pictures.

The desire-based craft identified by the participants came in two waves: the 1960s-1970s and the 2010s, interspersed with a lighter uptick in creativity in the 1980s of specifically religiously themed items of crochet and embroidery. Each wave had a dominant style and they are described in detail below.

The First Wave: 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s and 1970s had the greatest overlap of crafting between people of European origins and those of Chicago. Dora Stone made an afghan for her granddaughter Shoshana in the late 1960s when she went to college. In the early 1970s, Stone subsequently made one for each of her three daughters.[148] Devorah's grandmother made a lined crochet purse with orange and brown worsted yarn in 1968 and a black and silver sweater for Devorah's sister in 1970.[149] Ellen Goldman Kanter's paternal grandmother, Rose Schafner Goldman, made afghans for all her grandchildren in the late 1960s. Ellen received a chevron yellow-and-white striped afghan. She valued the blanket so highly she kept it preserved in plastic for years after Rose Goldman's death in 1972, so as to preserve a memory of her grandmother. Ellen eventually gave it to her daughter, who is named after her grandmother and who deeply values the piece. During the same time period, Shirley Tenner Goldman of Chicago (Ellen's mother) made sweaters.[150] Shoshana, of Chicago, knitted a scarf for her father in the late 1960s as a Hannukah

[148] Anonymous [Shoshana], interview.

[149] Anonymous [Devorah], interview.

[150] Goldman Kanter, interview.

present.[151] In 1972, Bashah Chavah, of Chicago, knitted six white shawls for her entire bridal party, including herself. The project was so big she recruited her mother to put on the fringe, to make sure she finished in time.[152] The purse, afghan, scarf, and shawls remain consistent in style, regardless of the place of origin of the maker.

Needlepoints also became popular during this time. Renee Werner's mother, Bessie Selz of Chicago, made her daughter a detailed needlepoint of Jean-Honore Fragonard's *Young Girl Reading*.[153] Selz purchased a kit with the picture printed on needlepoint canvas in color and taught herself needlepoint. She did not make the picture for a special occasion; rather, it was "just something a mom does for her daughter with love." The needlepoint is three feet in width and vertically extends even taller. It currently hangs on the wall of Renee's home.[154] In 1974, Ellen's mother had a photo of Jerusalem printed on needlepoint canvas. She saw it on the cover of a magazine (believed by Ellen to have been likely *Hadassah*) and recreated it with needlepoint. As the printing was done in black and white, she made all the color decisions herself, and framed it upon completion. The needlepoint is over half a foot tall and almost two feet in length.[155]

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[151] Anonymous [Shoshana], interview.

[152] Anonymous [Bashah Chavah], interview.

[153] Werner, interview.

[154] Werner, interview.

[155] Goldman Kanter, interview.

Figure 10: *Young Girl Reading* Embroidery by Bessie Selz. Her initials can be seen on the bottom right. Completed in 1975.

Judith Simon, of Chicago, created a small needlepoint in the mid-1970s. Her initials are stitched in the bottom left corner and the piece still hangs in her mother's home. Most of the needlepoint she did as a child, however, was holiday-themed cross stitch. Judith's paternal grandmother, of Ushmenev (located then in either Poland or Russia), intentionally taught her grandchildren craft through Judaica,[156] to make sure they had adequate knowledge of Jewish holidays and the rituals associated with them. She herself crocheted scarves and blankets as well as other knitted items, in addition to the Judaica crafts. Judith's grandmother immigrated in 1910, around the age of 12 (her birth year was not known), and Judith does not know whether her grandmother learned her craft

[156] Judaica refers to material items, often decorated, representing Jewish ethnic and religious culture.

skills in Eastern Europe or in Chicago. Judith's mother did needlepoint as a youth and did not do craftwork as an adult, save to teach Judith needlepoint. Judith did cross stitch (learned from her grandmother), needlepoint (learned from her mother), knitting, and crocheting (learned at summer camp, where she made kippot) until, like her mother, her interests changed in adulthood.

Judith often bought the cross stitch kits either from Rosenblum's, Chicago's primary Judaica store, located at the time on Devon Avenue, one of the former centers of Jewish commerce in Chicago, or from the gift shop or bazaars at Anshe Emet, her synagogue. The kits consisted of white cloth with blue Xs marked in a given design. Judith and her first cousin used to cross stitch over the Xs in navy blue thread under the tutelage of their grandmother. Judith made a large tablecloth for Shabbat with images of a challah, candle sticks, a kiddush cup, and doves, among other things, as well as the words *Shabatot L'Menuḥa/ U'Moadim L'Simḥa* (Sabbaths of Rest and Happy Holidays; in Hebrew lettering: *שבתות למנוחה ומועדים לשמחה*). She also made a square challah cover, with Jewish stars, a kiddish cup, and a challah, framed at the top and bottom with words of a Shabbat blessing. Her square matzah cover declares "*Ḥag Hamatsot*" (Holiday of Matzahs; in Hebrew lettering: *.חג המצות*) at the top and depicts every item on the seder plate as well as matzah, all labeled in Hebrew. Judith's grandmother also made two pieces herself: a Passover tablecloth and a circular matzah cover, in the same style as the others. Judith still has all of these items in her possession.[157] Echoes of Ida Porter's bridge tablecloth can be seen in the floral border and cross stitching of Judith's family work. The machine-made design, because it is not inspired by the crafter, speaks to the change in craft from an ongoing life's work to an optional activity undertaken for enjoyment.

[157] Judith Simon, interview by Author, Zoom, May 14, 2021.

Figure 11: Tablecloths completed by Judith Simon and her grandmother in the 1970s. Bottom left: Passover tablecloth, made with her grandmother. Closeups of the Shabbat tablecloth: Top left: *Shabatot L'Menuḥa/ U'Moadim L'Simḥa*. Top right: Kiddish cup surrounded by ornamentation. Bottom right: Challah, above outer border.

Natalie Solomon and her mother, Sylvia Gilbert, both of Chicago, present a slightly unique case. Gilbert crafted entirely from a needs-based perspective well into the 1960s. The family had one income earner, and Gilbert sewed curtains for the living room, kitchen, and two children's bedrooms. Some were simply constructed, and some had pleats or drawstrings, which required complex design and planning. Gilbert also sewed most of the clothes her daughter wore. She spared herself the effort for her sons with hand-me-downs from older cousins. Gilbert sewed clothes (or costumes) for all her children for special occasions like Halloween. Like Sarah Sheina, Natalie remembers feeling jealous of the store-bought clothes her classmates. Upon entering the workforce as a teacher in the late 1960s, Gilbert quickly transitioned her work to a desire-based model. She continued

her sewing and also expanded her repertoire to include knitting, crocheting, macramé, and needlepoint.[158]

Gilbert learned knitting from her mother, Eleanor Leavitt Skar, born in Chicago in 1909. (Natalie qualifies for the study through her paternal grandfather, Skar's husband, who was born in Poland.) Gilbert also learned some sewing from Skar. Otherwise, she learned most of her skills as an adult. She significantly advanced her sewing skills through the instructions from patterns she used for items her family needed. The reduction in her free time after her return to work seemed to have no effect on her output. Her case is unique, because her transition to desire-based craft work occurred at the same time her daughter was learning craft skills. As Gilbert learned crocheting, so did Natalie; when Gilbert picked up a cross stitch kit from a family vacation, Natalie got one, too, and the two learned their craft skills simultaneously. The 1970s saw a plethora of sewn items, afghans, and needlepoint from Gilbert. Among other things, Natalie made a macramé belt and her first crocheted kippah, with string purchased from the canteen at summer camp. She also remembers making chartreuse corduroy pants as an advanced project in Home Economics, utilizing the skills she learned watching her mother sew.[159]

One piece of note, distinctly remembered by many family members, was Gilbert's life-size macramé wall hanging, titled *Eyes of Isis.* Gilbert followed a pattern and spent weeks knotting the thick brown and orange ropes. The piece consists of six panels, alternating brown and orange in color with symmetrical chevron shapes framing a center through-line extending horizontally throughout the piece, accented by three-dimensional circular knots. The panels sit on either side of a larger center panel, which hosts a substantial, layered hoop wrapped in the orange thread, extending several layers outward, perpendicular from the wall. The hoop connects to three thick ropes on either side,

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[158] Natalie Solomon, interview by Author, Zoom, May 4, 2021.

[159] Solomon, interview.

extending from the top of the middle panel and draping at the side of the hoop. All panels end in crimped fringe. Attaching each hoop to the one below proved enormously difficult, and Natalie remembers her mother repeatedly attempting the attachment, finding it not to perfection, and ripping everything out to start again. The piece remained on the wall of Gilbert's home through to the end of her life, fifty years later.[160]

Figure 12: *Eyes of Isis*, by Sylvia Gilbert. Completed in the early 1970s.

During the early 1970s, Dora Stone, a seamstress by profession, spent two years embroidering a tablecloth of her own design in anticipation of her granddaughter Shoshana's eventual wedding. The piece stretches out over six feet in length, with large roses along a center circle, cutouts adding to the texture and bringing in the color of whatever table sits beneath. The outer border has two parallel lines depicting a vine, winding around the edge to meet roses at the corner and in the middle of the longer sides. The edge of the cloth is cut to match the vine's path and oscillates around. The entire piece was worked with a dark gray thread.[161] Stone went on to make two more for

[160] Solomon, interview.

[161] Anonymous [Shoshana], interview.

her other granddaughters. Two of her great-granddaughters, the granddaughters of Zelda Freeman, used one of the other tablecloths as the chuppah in their weddings,[162] a demonstration of the tremendous strength of connection handcraft offers between Eastern European Jewish women across time.

Figure 13: Dora Stone's Embroidered Tablecloth for Shoshana's Wedding. Completed by 1973.

The 1980s

The 1980s saw a plethora of overtly Jewish handcraft. Helen Bloch, of Chicago, Natalie, Judith, and Ellen's sister all crocheted kippot. Ellen says her sister learned the craft in Israel, where they both lived in the 1970s; she first received handmade kippot as gifts and became inspired to make them herself. Kippot became Natalie's signature crafted

[162] Freeman, interview.

item and in the 1980s she made dozens, largely for weddings. She and Judith both learned to crochet at Jewish summer camp in the 1970s, in order to make kippot.[163]

Helen attended high school during this decade at Ida Crown, a Jewish day school in Chicago. It was popular at the time for girls to crochet kippot, and they often did so as gifts for their boyfriends. Helen still has two kippot, both originally made for her father. One is gray with a blue and yellow checkered border and her father's name, Marvin, in red. This was her first *kippah* (kippot in the singular). The other was patriotic, with white and red concentric circles and a border of blue arches with white stars, made originally for July 4th. (Her father was an American World War II veteran and very patriotic.)[164]

Figure 14: Helen Bloch's Kippot. Completed in the 1980s.

Natalie made kippot for three wedding parties in the 1980s: her own, that of her close friend, and one of her cousins. These wedding parties consisted of 6-8 groomsmen or more. Natalie's kippot usually have a single base color with a pattern of roses or geometric shapes lining the outer edge. One kippah, in light blue, has candlesticks in white with tiny orange flames. In some pieces she interrupts the border pattern with the

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[163] Simon, interview; Solomon, interview.

[164] Helen Bloch, Zoom, June 1, 2021.

name of the wearer, either in Hebrew or in both Hebrew and English. Many machine-made kippot are made specifically for b'nai mitzvah and weddings, and have the name of the celebrated party and the date of the event printed on the inside. The kippot Natalie made by hand always had the same design for each wedding party with the exception of the groom, who received a distinct detail on his – often his Hebrew name. The uniform design for each wedding effectively allows users to date the kippah, in similar fashion to the way people use machine-made kippot use the inscription to remember events; the handcraft emphasizes the memory. Natalie's close friend Sarah joined her in making some of the kippot for her wedding, and Natalie recruited her mother Gilbert for help with those for her (Natalie's) own. Though Gilbert knew how to crochet, Natalie taught her the style of kippot crocheting, which uses small hooks and graphed images.[165]

Figure 15: A Selection of Natalie Solomon's Kippot. Most were completed in the 1980s and early 1990s. The white kippah in the top left is an example of the distinction made for grooms.

[165] Solomon, interview.

Renee Werner's grandmother Anna Feldman, who immigrated in 1911 from Loghoshin (then a part of either Russia or Poland), crocheted kippot as well. She crocheted hundreds of them for a local *yeshiva* (boy's school), from the 1960's until her death in 1980. No Orthodox people responded to the study, and, given the earlier timing of Feldman's production of kippot, as compared to those of the 1980s, and her proximity to Orthodox practice, more research is needed into the craft practices of the Orthodox community.[166]

Sarah Sheina's mother made a number of tablecloths in the early 1980s. As her mother was bedridden, a friend brought over a cross stitch kit for a Passover tablecloth, and her mother was hooked. The tablecloth is fashioned in a similar style to the ones Judith and her grandmother made, with a central, inner border of floral vines with Hebrew lettering and imagery relating to the holiday. The outer border is a prominent aspect of the piece, with two lions holding the stone tablets at the heads of the table. This tablecloth uses gold and sky-blue threads, rather than the singular navy blue. Sarah Sheina's mother also made a matzah cover and several more tablecloths during this time.[167]

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[166] Werner, interview.

[167] Anonymous [Sarah Sheina], interview.

Figure 16: Sarah Sheina's Mother's Passover Cross Stitch Tablecloth. Completed in the early 1980s.

Unlike the other interviewees, in this decade Shoshana continued sewing, using the hybrid motivation for her work of both need and desire. She sewed doll dresses for her daughter the way Dora Stone did for Shoshana in her childhood. She also designed shades in 1988 for her windows, like Sylvia Gilbert did in the 1960s. Shoshana kept them until the family could afford machine-made shades, at which point they replaced the handmade with something store-bought.[168]

Second Wave: The Late 2000s and 2010s

With the exception of 8-10 kippot for Natalie's brother's wedding in 1992 (which took her over a year to finish and were ultimately completed in a feat of determination while

[168] Anonymous [Shoshana], interview.

pregnant on bed rest and medication that blurred her eyesight),[169] no items were recorded in the 1990s. Crafting amid the interviewees did not pick up again until around 2010 and later.

Chaya Rifka renewed her interest in knitting and crocheting around 2010. She crocheted a "lap-ghan" for herself, to put over her legs while working in the winters. She knitted a scarf for her husband and has been crocheting and knitting square baby blankets for infants since 2019. She also made a large crochet doily, similar to the smaller one made by Ida Porter before 1945. All her projects she does by choice, rather than necessity.[170]

Shoshana mentioned two pieces of note since 2016. The first was a nightgown she made for her granddaughter. When Shoshana's daughter was young, Shoshana bought her a Christian Dior satin nightgown. The dress remained in her memory, and when she went to buy a similar one for her granddaughter, she concluded that "they don't make nightgowns anymore!" After failing to find a machine-made version, Shoshana decided to sew one by hand. The second piece of note, which inspired a series, came out of a similar need-desire hybrid motivation. Shoshana had a purchased plastic tissue holder that was shaped flatly in such a way as to prevent the tissues from disappearing inside the container, as they frequently do in standard tissue boxes. After discovering the holders were no longer being produced, she made one herself. She described sewing in the way her grandmother taught her, by way of simply "figuring it out" based on looking at an image, step-by-step. The piece became part of a series when it was discovered by other relatives, who, appreciating the successful design, clamored for replicas of their own.[171]

Devorah also returned to sewing. The 2010s saw her craft a large tablecloth, a table runner, a piano bench cover, and even a "tied" quilt. She describes her crafting output as

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[169] Solomon, interview.

[170] Anonymous [Chaya Rifka], interview.

[171] Anonymous [Shoshana], interview.

"long gaps in between bursts of activity." Devorah also knit a scarf, and then a hat and scarf set for dressier occasions. One year she made small pouches attached to a key ring on black fabric with multicolored music notes for all her piano students. She gifted the pouches to them at their recital.[172]

Natalie has stayed consistent with the kippah crafting of her adolescence. She largely moved away from crafting in favor of other interests, but she continues to use the life events of her family as motivation to make kippot. Each of her three children received a kippah for their bar or bat mitzvah from 2003 – 2007. Sylvia Gilbert was similarly motivated by love of her family and made six afghans from around 2007 to 2018, one for each of her grandchildren as a gift upon matriculating to college.[173]

Sarah Sheina returned to crafting after a hiatus as well. In 2003, for her daughter's wedding, she made an intricate afghan of individual multicolored flowers connected simply to each other, without filler. The piece required so much effort it had to be gifted well after the wedding date. Sarah Sheina also made two amigurumi monkeys in 2015 and dozens of finger puppets for her grandchildren in 2010.[174]

3.4 Summation: A Century of Textile Work

Textiles provide an active outlet for creative expression in both needs-based and desire-based environments. Craft work of the interviewees and their ancestors more often reflected the trends of the decade in which pieces were made rather than those learned as a child. Creators were not limited by the knowledge passed down to them; if they wanted to learn a new technique for a project, they learned from classes or taught

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[172] Anonymous [Devorah], interview.

[173] Solomon, interview.

[174] Anonymous [Sarah Sheina], interview.

themselves. Moreover, they maintained flexibility in their knowledge and were able to significantly change the style of a given technique to match shifts in style over time.

Echoes of the needs-based era carry through to today. Most participants and their ancestors made items for other people and not themselves. Several interviewees reported starting disproportionately large projects, like knitting vests for a small holiday gift exchange or crocheting whole shawls for an entire bridal party, and having trouble finishing such an undertaking or facing an awkward reception for their disproportionate effort. Crafters still face gendered policing around their creativity.

Textiles often intersected with cultural expression. Many items were explicitly Jewish, such as kippot, themed tablecloths, and challah and matzah covers. A great many others were created specifically for inherently cultural life events, such as births and marriages, or were tangentially connected, such as the wearing of a handmade dress to High Holiday services. The connection of craft to geographic locales offers an even broader point of cultural contact: the ancestral craft knowledge learned in Eastern Europe slowly translated into a style of making consistent with others residing in Chicago at a given time, with tangible influences from earlier styles. Further research on the context for American craft during the 20th century could offer deeper insight into whether Chicago has its own style of craft and, if so, how that connects to its makeup of immigrant descendants and American craft more broadly.

Despite being a primarily solo activity, crafting provides a consistent source of bonding between family members, most often women, especially during girlhood. Crafting often serves as a unique experience of girlhood and the beginnings of a lifetime of creativity. Textile work consistently served as a site of bonding between women in the family. Most interviewees reported two or three generations of crafters learning fundamental techniques from older family members and popular contemporary techniques outside the home. The process of learning craft skills, like the process of hand making, is slow, allowing for repeated moments of social connection and cementing memories for the

long term. Most interviewees had fond memories of time spent watching their mothers, fathers, grandfathers, and grandmothers create; those interviewees that did craft work as adults often spent time teaching their skills to their children. Specific items, often the result of highly skilled work, remain within the family as treasured heirlooms, long after the death of the maker. Most items carry the stories of small moments in time; crafters remembered the social context around nearly every item they made themselves and most items made by a parent or grandparent. Other items remained in the memories of interviewees even when the item was no longer around; pictures greatly aided that process.

Focusing on textiles as sources of memory serve to bring women's experiences, creativity, skill, and history to the foreground, and can be directly compared to family trees as historical records. Family trees serve as a written record of family relatives, occupations, marriages, children, and the locations in which they were living. When discussing the textile heirlooms in their family, the participants recalled the names, occupations, marriages, children, and location of their ancestors. Participants also recalled the social context around which the items were made, such as the state of the family's finances, the apartment building in which the maker was living, or the pregnancy or birth of a child. Furthermore, the memory embedded within the heirlooms sometimes required multiple people to obtain the full picture. For example, Judith made multiple phone calls to her mother during her interview in order to fill in gaps of information about a particular piece.[175] Family records, if they include women and the stories of their lives, require the family for their preservation – they are a group endeavor. By contrast, family trees offer linear lists of names and demographics without requiring the presence other individuals. They can preserve records farther back in time than the textiles could in this study and often come with stories about the individuals on the page. For instance,

[175] Simon, interview.

Helen showed me her family tree in her interview and began discussing the occupations and migration stories of some of her ancestors. However, when looking at the family tree, I heard stories of men and almost nothing of the women, despite the presence of their names on the page; when we returned our discussion to textiles, I primarily heard about the lives of women.[176] Helen had information about both the men and women in her family at the start of the interview; the structure of the family tree led her to naturally offer stories of men and the nature of textiles led her to tell of women, including herself. In short, textiles within the families of descendants of the Eastern European Jewish community serve as both a creative endeavor and an important historical record.

[176] Bloch, interview.

Conclusion

Craft is deeply connected to cultural expression. Mary Antin connected her increasing absorption of American culture to the reduction of handmade textiles in her home and wardrobe. As she could not let go of her immigrant past, however – her fame depended on it – neither could she entirely let go of the handmade items in her life. The Jewish community of Cincinnati in 1913 created an entire fair to celebrate their heritage and promote unity amidst increasing xenophobia; the crafts displayed there, nonetheless, showed a distinct connection with their locales of origin, in addition to the wide and varied skill of an international group of makers. Twelve interviewees affirmed the regionality of craft production and showed the slow adjustment of the Eastern European community to a US context through the deliberate reorientation of their craftwork.

The answer to the question of whether the fear of assimilation affected Eastern European Jewish handcraft is a nuanced one. The influence of American culture on the craft produced by Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the US and their descendants is clear, from the semi-princess dresses of *Di Froyen Velt* to the consistency of crafted items of the interviewees between decades. However, ready absorption of "Russian lace" into Mary Antin's Polotzk indicates the possibility that Eastern European Jewish craft was "assimilating" well before immigration to the US. It opens the possibility that "Jewish" craft is entirely dependent on the location and point in history of the Jews in question. As the Jewish people are diasporic, perhaps so goes their craft. Further research into the shifts in textile craft production of the Eastern European Jews who remained in Europe, as well as into the effects of global shifts in craft as they relate to local production, will shed further light onto the creative history of the community.

Moreover, from the analysis presented in this thesis, white lace of the late 1800s/early 1900s stands out as both a craft and an art form. Lace from this era retains a consistency in its color (white) and function (beautification of the home). Like art, each piece was

different and reflects the hand of the maker. Primarily, it was described as an art by contemporary viewers. Further attention to the style, especially as connected to the Eastern European Jewish culture of the makers, will broaden the field of art history and validate the creative history of the community beyond the current short list of painters associated with "Jewish Art."

Textile work, and crafting in general, often requires precision and needs to be the sole focus of one's attention. If someone is embroidering a corner of a tablecloth, no one else can embroider that same corner at the same time; likewise, when someone is crocheting a bedspread, another crafter cannot add rows to that same cloth. This can lead crafters to seek out information about craft on their own. A crafter can just as easily learn new techniques from reading as from asking her mother. The rapid change in style from decade to decade within the past century encouraged that behavior; keeping up with contemporary creative styles means one's mother or grandmother will not be a useful source of information anyway. Despite the individuality of such creative work, textiles remain a strong point of bonding between matriarchs and their descendants. Craft serves as a method to celebrate girlhood and to create material items, such as tablecloths, that can be used by entire families at the same time. It remains as an expression of Jewish identity, regardless of whether crafted items have explicitly Jewish themes or not. The inherently slow work of textile handcraft also solidifies the memories associated with each item, and thus the items kept within a family can act as a historical record equal to family trees.

As indicated by the work of the interviewees, craft maintains its relevance well into late stage capitalism, when the need to create such items has not applied for decades. There is much to be learned from its continued development.

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Interviews

Anonymous, Basha Chava. Interview by Author. Zoom, May 12, 2021.

Anonymous, Chaya Rifka. Interview by Author. Zoom, June 18, 2021.

Anonymous, Devorah. Interview by Author. Zoom, May 6, 2021.

Anonymous, Masha. Interview by Author, May 12, 2021.

Anonymous, Sarah Sheina. Interview by Author. Zoom, June 14, 2021.

Anonymous, Shoshana. Interview by Author. Zoom, May 24, 2021.

Bloch, Helen. Interview by Author. Zoom, June 1, 2021.

Freeman, Zelda. Interview by Author. Zoom, May 4, 2021.

Goldman Kanter, Ellen. Interview by Author. Zoom, May 6, 2021.

Simon, Judith. Interview by Author. Zoom, May 14, 2021.

Solomon, Natalie. Interview by Author. Zoom, May 4, 2021.

Werner, Renee. Interview by Author. Zoom, May 10, 2021.

Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Information Provided to Participants

Re: Interview Request MA Dissertation research
` Title: Matriarchal Lines: Textile Memory During Assimilation

May 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

"Matriarchal Lines" is a thesis project focusing on the nature of assimilation in Chicago from the perspective of textiles – that is, what Ashkenazis were making when they immigrated and how the products of craft labor changed over time. The thesis seeks to understand how processes of immigration and assimilation affected what people were making. The research also seeks to understand what people have kept in their homes as handmade heirlooms. As part of the research, I am conducting hour-long interviews in order to hear further context around textile work among first- and second-generation Ashkenazi immigrants to Chicago. I am writing to invite you to contribute to a thesis project that I am working on for the Department of Visual Arts by participating in a video interview.

My name is Elena Solomon and I am a graduate student at the Western University, located in Ontario, Canada, working under the supervision of Dr. Kirsty Robertson. The information collected from this interview will be used as a resource for a Master's thesis project, conference presentations, and future publications. It may also be used for a PhD dissertation. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you need to make an informed decision about participating in this research. I am inviting you to participate in this research because of your insight into your ancestor's textile making activities and/or your personal experience with making textiles.

If you agree to participate in this project, you will be invited to take part in an interview that will take approximately one hour. You will be asked questions pertaining to the project noted above or other questions that relate to your experience or expertise. Inclusion criteria includes being a first- or second-generation Jewish immigrant to Chicago and either: having an Ashkenazi ancestor (mother, grandmother, aunt, etc.) who made textiles of any kind and/or you yourself make textiles of any kind. Textiles can mean sewing, embroidery, knitting/crocheting, shpanyer arbet, etc. Exclusion criteria includes participants who do not have an Ashkenazi ancestor who made textiles and lived in Chicago. The interview will take place virtually. For ease of transcription, with consent the interview will be digitally recorded and the resulting files will be stored on Western's OneDrive, a file storage system, under a password protected file. On the "Letter of Consent" form you may indicate whether you consent to being recorded or not. If you do not wish to be recorded, only notes will be taken.

The interview data (e.g. sound files, emails, images, etc.) will be stored for seven years. Excerpts from this correspondence may be used in the writing of the MA thesis, public talks, future publications, and doctoral research and writing. You may indicate your choices regarding anonymity and the use of quotations on the Consent Form under the 'Restrictions and Permissions' section. Your choices include: utilizing your name and quotations in my research, utilizing your quotations while remaining anonymous, and choosing to remain anonymous with no quotations used in my research. Interview recordings, transcripts, and emails will be saved on my password protected computer for seven years in the event that the material needs to be referenced at any point. Participants will receive a copy of the interview (video recording) as a record of family history. The consent form has an option to provide another point of contact to coordinate the transfer and storage of the interview if you prefer. You may also request a copy of the thesis (in a summarized or full format). Any items containing personal information will be kept under password protection. Your confidentiality will be respected.

No information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your specific consent to the disclosure. In accordance with Western's research policies, the supervisor will have access to all study records for 7 years. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. We will strive to ensure the confidentiality of your research-related records. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as we may have to disclose certain information under certain laws. In addition, delegated institutional representatives of Western University and its Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research in accordance with regulatory requirements.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw your interview from the study at any time. These interviews are intended to be free-flowing discussions in which you will be able to share your knowledge of the given subject. If you would like to participate but are uncomfortable with any aspect of this process, I am open to alternative routes of participation and welcome your correspondence. You should only agree to take part if you feel comfortable that you know enough about this project and how the information will be used.

There are no known risks to you if you participate in this study. Furthermore, this study should not inconvenience you aside from taking up some of your time. There are several benefits associated with this project. The textiles and histories discussed in this research were mundane and thus, there is little formal documentation of the work. By participating in the study, you are contributing to a research project in the fields of Jewish studies, diasporic studies, contemporary art (including craft), and museum studies. This project aspires to shed further light on the process of migration and assimilation, the experience of Jewishness in the diaspora, and the incredible skill involved in making textiles, thereby making a place for this important work in the Jewish and Chicago historical record and art scholarship.

Please note:

- You will not be compensated for your participation in this project.
- You do not waive any legal rights providing consent.
- You may keep a copy of this letter of intent for your personal records if you wish. If you agree to participate, I will require one signed copy of the consent form(s).

Any further Questions?

Please feel free to contact me at if you have any questions. Alternatively, you may also contact the study's Principle Investigator, Dr. Kirsty Robertson.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact:

Office of Research Ethics
Western University, London, Ontario

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,
Elena Solomon
MA Candidate
Department of Visual Arts
Western University

Appendix B: Letter of Consent Provided to Participants

Matriarchal Lines: Textile Memory During Assimilation

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. An electronic survey will be sent to you to obtain consent for participation. The following is a written list of the questions, as a copy for your records. This form does not need to be printed or physically signed; it is only for your records.

FORM OF PARTICIPATION

Most videos will be conducted over Zoom. A link will be provided over email that users can click and enter the meeting directly. Do you feel comfortable accessing Zoom in this way? If the box for "no" is checked, you will be contacted about the possibilities for other options.

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

VIDEO RECORDINGS

Please check one of the following boxes to indicate your preference:

- ❑ I give my consent to have the video interview recorded.
- ❑ I do not give my consent to have the video interview recorded but the interviewer may take notes.

RESTRICTIONS & PERMISSION

Please check one of the following boxes to indicate your preference:

- ❑ I give my consent to utilize my name and quotations in your research.
- ❑ I give my consent to utilize my quotations in your research, but I chose to remain anonymous.
- ❑ I do not give my consent to release my name and quotations in your research.

FOLLOW UP

Please check one (or more) of the following boxes to indicate your preference:

- ❑ I would like to read a summary of your research findings.
- ❑ I would like to read a copy of your dissertation.
- ❑ I would like to receive a copy of my video interview.
- ❑ I do not need to have any follow up about this dissertation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please provide your preferred method(s) of contact:

- ❑ Email address _____
- ❑ Phone _____

Optional Alternate Contact for Coordination and Transfer of the Video Interview Recording:

- ❑ Contact Name and Relation: _____
- ❑ Contact Email Address: _____
- ❑ Contact Phone: _____

SIGNATURES

_____	_____	_____
Research Participant (Printed Name)	Research Participant (Signature)	Date
	_____	_____
	Elena Solomon, MA Candidate	Date

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Re: MA Dissertation research
Title: Matriarchal Lines: Textile Memory During Assimilation

I intend to interview 5-10 first- and second-generation immigrants, with "first-generation" defined as both those born outside the US and those born in the US to one or more parents who immigrated. The people I intend to interview will be recruited through synagogues and word of mouth in the Chicagoland area.

My rationale is that these interviews will provide crucial insight into the social context surrounding creative output during the early-mid twentieth century that cannot be gleaned from historical records. The purpose of this study is to document which textile techniques were in use during these generations and how they changed over time or between generations.

Overall Objectives for the Interview Includes:

- Information about the social context of ancestral makers
    - What they were making and where they learned their skills
    - If the products of their handmaking changed after immigration
- Information about the interviewees' process of making
    - What were/are they making and where they learned their skills
    - How the products of their handmaking differed from preceding generations
    - The social context surrounding their output (necessity vs hobby, cultural vs hegemonic motivations)

Questions for these interviewees will include:

- Where is your family from originally?
- Who in your family made textiles? This includes any form: sewing, clothing design, embroidery, crochet, lace, etc. What types of things did they make and for what purposes?
- How did your family member(s) learn their skills?
- How did you learn your skills?
- What types of textiles have you made in your lifetime?
- Talk about the process of making [X project] when you were a child.
    - Who was it for?
    - How did you feel once the project was completed?
- Talk about the process of making [X project] when you were an adult.
    - Who was it for?
    - How did you feel once the project was completed?
- Why did you decide to learn [X technique]?
- What types of textiles do you still have in your possession that either you've made or your elders have made?

All qualitative interviews are variable by nature. Any questions that arise that differ from the above will be in service of the listed objectives and will remain in accordance with TCPS2 guidelines.

Appendix D: Interview Data

No.	Crafter	Origin of Maker	Piece of Note	Date of Piece (full note)	Date Approx.	Notes
1	Regina Strohli Lucas	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Lace doily (square) - drawn work	1940	1940	
2	Lena Klein	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Crocheted tablecloth	Before 1950s	1949	
3	Basha Chava's Maternal Grandmother	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Pillowcase (undecorated) made for Basha Chava's mother's wedding.	Before 1930	1929	
4	Dave Morris	The Pale of	Slacks for Sarah Sheina & family	1940s	1945	

		Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)				
5	Dave Morris	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Coat for Sarah Sheina	1940s	1945	
6	Dave Morris	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Winter jacket and pants (inspired by Eisenhower's military jacket) for Mat. Gma	1950s	1955	Designed by Mat. Gma, made by Mat. Gpa, 1950s
7	Dave Morris	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Winter warm outfit for Mat. Gma	1950s	1955	
8	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and	Embroidered picture - was supposed to be on a pillow. Framed in Shoshana's office - was	date unkown		Date Unknown

		other locations in Eastern Europe)	Mother Irene's most prized possessions.			
9	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	2 Trusseau night gowns for Zelda	1948	1948	
10	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Early cross stitch - in Gma Dora's home before Gpa Sam died	Early 1950s	1952	(Made by either by Shoshana's mother or Dora Stone)
11	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Doll blanket for Shoshana's amosandra doll. Knitted, patchwork.	1951	1951	
12	Dora Stone	The Pale of	Doll dresses	Early 1950s	1955	

		Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)			
13	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	A dress for daughter Irene and a matching one for granddaughter Shoshana	1951 or 1952	1952
14	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	13th birthday dress. Shoshana looked at pattern book and Gma Dora "whipped up" a dress.	1959	1959
15	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Patchwork afghans	Late 1950s-Early 1960s	1960
16	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and	Barbie doll dresses for granddaughter.	1960s	1965

		other locations in Eastern Europe)			
17	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Various Afghans	Late 1960s	1968
18	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Gray Rose Embroidered tablecloth. May have spent 2 years on it.	Between 1971 and before 1973 (Shoshana's wedding date).	1972
19	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Embroidered Tablecloth 2 for Granddaughter 2	1970s	1975
20	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and	Embroidered Tablecloth 3 for Granddaughter 3	1970s	1975

		other locations in Eastern Europe)			
21	Dora Stone	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Rose Afghan	Early 1970s	1972
22	Ida Patosky Tenner	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	White blouse and/or black skirt	1910s?	1910
23	Ida Patosky Tenner	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Short sleeved dress with print on white	Late 1930s	1938
24	Ida Patosky Tenner	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in	Fancy Dress	Late 1930s	1938

		Eastern Europe)				
25	Ida Patosky Tenner	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Sweater	Late 1930s	1938	
26	Ida Patosky Tenner	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Knitted shrug	Before 1940	1939	
27	Ida Patosky Tenner	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Sewn peasant costume for Daughter Shirley	Late 1930s	1938	
28	Ida Patosky Tenner	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in	Chevron yellow-white striped afghan - made for Ellen	The Pale (Gma Rose), late 60s.	1968	Preserved for years in plastic as memory of

		Eastern Europe)				Gma, eventually gave blanket to daughter when she was old enough. Ellen watched her grandmother make it.
29	Ida Patosky Tenner	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Crocheted afghans for the grandchildren	later in life	1965	Shtetl in the Pale (Pat. Gma Rose Schafner), later in life.
30	Devorah's Mat. Grandmother	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Dress for Devorah's Great Grandmother, as seen in the photo in *Becoming American Women*	1915-16	1915	Made by Devorah's Grandmother's Sister
31	Devorah's Mat.	The Pale of	Doll purses	1950s	1955	

	Grandmother	Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)			
32	Devorah's Mat. Grandmother	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Velvet dress for Devorah	1955-56	1956
33	Devorah's Mat. Grandmother's sisters	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Hairpin Lace Shawl, made for Mat. Gma	1955-1965	1960
34	Devorah's Mat. Grandmother	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Lined crochet purse	1968	1968

35	Devorah's Mat. Grandmother	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Black and Silver Sweater for Devorah's sister	1970	1970
36	Anna Feldman	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Hundreds of Kippot for the yeshiva	1960s-1980	1970
37	Anna Feldman	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Hundreds of Kippot for the yeshiva	1960s-1980	1970
38	Ida Radwolsky Porter	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Beaver coat for Masha's mother. Mother was very proud of it.	Date Unknown	

39	Ida Radwolsky Porter	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Grandmother's knitting bag - handmade	Date Unknown. Possibly made in Europe		
40	Ida Radwolsky Porter	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Crocheted throw	Date Unknown		
41	Ida Radwolsky Porter	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Bridge tablecloth	before 1945	1944	Made by Ida Porter and Daughter Grace
42	Ida Radwolsky Porter	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Crocheted bed spread - popcorn stitch. Unfinished.	Before 1945	1944	

43	Ida Radwolsky Porter	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Pulled work pomegranate doily	Before 1945	1944	
44	Ida Radwolsky Porter	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Pulled/embroidered square doily	Before 1945	1944	
45	Ida Radwolsky Porter	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Small crocheted doily	Before 1945	1944	
46	Ida Radwolsky Porter	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Embroidered tablecloths	1940s	1945	Made by Ida Porter and Daughter Grace

47	Judith Simon's Paternal Grandmother	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Crocheted scarves, blankets, some knitting.	Date Unknown	
48	Judith Simon's Paternal Grandmother	The Pale of Settlement (and other locations in Eastern Europe)	Zig Zag waist aprons	Date Unknown.	
49	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Black cape of crushed velvet	late 1960s.	1960
50	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Gray suit with hot pink collar and cuffs and homemade fabric-covered buttons. Dyed shoes hot pink to match. For cousin's wedding.	1967	1967
51	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Curtains (Many over the years) - first drapes when married, curtains in the kitchen, curtains in mom's old room and the uncle's old room - bedroom ones had pleats	1960s	1965

52	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Afghan - olive green, crocheted, with hexagons	Early 1970s	1975	
53	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Macramé belts	early 1970s	1975	Sylvia Gilbert and Natalie Solomon together
54	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	*Eyes of Isis*	Early 70s	1975	
55	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Wool Jacket - black and white plaid with a hood and a belt	mid-1970s	1975	
56	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	Pair of Chartreuse Corderoy Pants in Home Ec	1972	1972	
57	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	First kippah - Jewish star design with string from the canteen	1974 or 1975	1975	
58	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	Crocheted vests for a group	1972 or 1973	1973	
59	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Denim bedspread	1975 or 1976	1976	Sylvia Gilbert and Natalie Solomon

						together
60	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Giant pillows	1975 or 1976	1976	Sylvia Gilbert and Natalie Solomon together
61	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	*Happy Anniversary* Embroidery piece	early 1970s	1972	
62	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	Cross stitch from Amish country	1972	1972	
63	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Needlepoint wall hanging for decoration	1970s	1975	
64	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	Kippot for friend Sarah's wedding	mid-1980s	1985	Natalie Solomon and Sarah
65	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	Kippot for cousin's wedding	1986	1986	
66	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	Kippot for Natalie's wedding party	1981-1982	1982	Natalie Solomon and Sylvia Gilbert

						(who learned small crochet and designing with crochet from Natalie), and 1 friend Bessie,
67	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	Kippot for brother Sheldon and Donna's wedding. Took over a year to finish the set.	1990-1992	1992	
68	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	the Giant Needlepoint from a friend	Unfinished	2020	
69	Natalie Solomon	Chicago	Bat mitzvah kippah	2013, 2015, 2017	2015	
70	Sylvia Gilbert	Chicago	6 afghans for grandchildren going to college	2010s	2015	
71	Shirley Tenner Goldman	Chicago	Sweaters	Late 1960s - Early 1970s	1970	
72	Shirley Tenner	Chicago	Sweaters	Late 1960s -	1970	

	Goldman			Early 1970s	
73	Shirley Tenner Goldman	Chicago	Jerusalem needlepoint	1974	1974
74	Ellen Goldman Kanter's sister	Chicago	Crocheted kippot	Late 1970s - Early 1980s	1980
75	Ellen Goldman Kanter's sister	Chicago	Quilt for Ellen's son	1983	1983
76	Ellen Goldman Kanter's daughter	Chicago	Scarf	2013	2013
77	Ellen Goldman Kanter's daughter	Chicago	Baby blanket	2020	2020
78	Devorah's mother	Chicago	Yellow crocheted blanket for daughter's birth	1955	1955

79	Devorah	Chicago	Sweater, socks, slippers, scarves, crocheted stars	before 1989 and after 2007	1988
80	Devorah	Chicago	Knit flowers	after 2007	2007
81	Devorah	Chicago	Quilt. Took 7 years to complete.	before 1989 and after 2007	2010
82	Devorah	Chicago	Sweater, socks, slippers, scarves, crocheted stars	before 1989 and after 2007	2008
83	Devorah	Chicago	Keychain pouches for students	2011	2011
84	Devorah	Chicago	Sewn piano bench cover	after 2007	2007
85	Devorah	Chicago	Table runner (sewn)	after 2007	2007
86	Devorah	Chicago	Large tablecloth (sewn)	after 2007	2007
87	Devorah	Chicago	"Tied" quilt	after 2007	2007
88	Bessie Selz	Chicago	"Young Girl Reading" needlepoint for Renee	Bessie Selz,	1975

				1975		
89	Renee Werner	Chicago	Crocheted shawls and afghans	1970s	1975	
90	Renee Werner	Chicago	Costumes for her daughter's nursery school graduations	1975	1975	
91	Basha Chava Anonymous	Chicago	Embroidered square for a pillow. Unfinished.	Date unknown.		
92	Basha Chava Anonymous	Chicago	Knitted shawls for bridesmaids at her wedding (6 in total)	1972	1972	Basha Chava and mother put on fringe
93	Basha Chava Anonymous	Chicago	Embroidered pillow cover for brother's 25th wedding anniversary (unfinished)	1978	1978	
94	Grace Porter Lucas	Chicago	Quilt/appliqué in Masha's childhood room	Late 1940s/Early 50s	1950	
95	Grace Porter Lucas	Chicago	Petit point upholstered chair	before 1948	1947	

96	Chaya Rifka	Chicago	First knitted sweater - arms of different sizes. Was given to family friend years later who had cancer and a swollen arm.	1950s	1955
97	Chaya Rifka	Chicago	Doll jacket with a fur collar	1950s	1955
98	Chaya Rifka	Chicago	Doll clothes	1950s	1955
99	Grace Porter Lucas	Chicago	Doll outfits	1950s	1955
100	Grace Porter Lucas	Chicago	Dresses for Chaya Rifka when she was in grad school, because Mother wanted to and Chaya Rifka needed clothes	1970-1973	1972
101	Grace Porter Lucas	Chicago	Handmade dress for Masha's wedding. Went to the store first to buy one, couldn't find one she liked, bought a pattern to match the bridesmaids dresses.	1975	1975
102	Chaya Rifka	Chicago	Larger crocheted doily	within last 10	2015

				years		
103	Chaya Rifka	Chicago	Square baby blankets for infants - knitted and crocheted	2019-on	2020	
104	Chaya Rifka	Chicago	Knitted scarf for husband	2011	2011	
105	Chaya Rifka	Chicago	Crocheted lap-ghan	"recently"	2020	
106	Judith Simon	Chicago	Cross Stitch Challah Cover	Late 1960s/Early 1970s	1970	Judith and her cousin, supported by Pat. Gma
107	Judith Simon	Chicago	Tennis cover for father	mid-1970s	1975	
108	Judith Simon	Chicago	Framed needlepoint	1975 or 1976	1976	
109	Judith Simon	Chicago	Crocheted kippot	1970s or 1980s	1980	
110	Helen Bloch	Chicago	Scarf	Late 1980s	1988	Helped by mother

111	Helen Bloch	Chicago	Crocheted kippot	Late 1980s	1988
112	Sarah Sheina	Chicago	Potholder and apron - first sewed pieces	1940s	1945
113	Estelle Preis	Chicago	Red knit child's Jumper for Sarah Sheina	Early 40s	1942
114	Estelle Preis	Chicago	Granny square afghan for son's birth	Early 1940s	1942
115	Sarah Sheina	Chicago	Light blue knit sweater - First knit piece.	1950	1950
116	Estelle Preis	Chicago	Hats, scarves, mittens	over the years	n/a
117	Sarah Sheina	Chicago	Scarves for friends in HS, afghans, sweater for husband	1960s - onward	1960
117	Sarah Sheina	Chicago	Scarves for friends in HS, afghans, sweater for husband	1960s - onward	2020
118	Estelle Preis	Chicago	Passover tablecloth - cross stich	Early 1980s	1982
119	Estelle Preis	Chicago	Matzah cover	Early 1980s	1982
120	Estelle Preis	Chicago	Tablecloths	Early 1980s	1982

121	Estelle Preis	Chicago	Knitted afghan for grandson, in graduate school	1994	1994
122	Sarah Sheina	Chicago	Flower Afghan	2003	2003
123	Sarah Sheina	Chicago	Amiguri monkeys	2015	2015
124	Sarah Sheina	Chicago	Finger puppets	2010 for several years after	2014
125	Sarah Sheina	Chicago	Blue and red log cabin (mosaic logs) knitted afghan. Donated.	2018	2018
126	Shoshana Anonymous	Chicago	knitted scarf for father - Hannukah present	Late 60s.	1968
127	Shoshana Anonymous	Chicago	Doll dresses for her daughter, the way her grandmother made for her. Made without patterns.	1980-81	1981
128	Shoshana Anonymous	Chicago	Drapes - self-designed roman shades. Had them until they could afford machine-made roman shades.	1988	1988

129	Shoshana Anonymous	Chicago	Kleenex holder - self-designed based on a plastic version from years earlier.	2019-now	2020
130	Shoshana Anonymous	Chicago	Nightgown for her granddaughter ("they don't make nightgowns anymore!").	2016-17.	2017

Curriculum Vitae – Elena Solomon

EDUCATION

M.A., Western University — *Expected September 2021*
London, Ontario, CA
Art History and Curatorial Studies

B.A., University of Illinois — *August 2008 – May 2012*
Urbana-Champaign, IL, US *Summa Cum Laude*
Sociology | Environmental Studies (Double Major)

PUBLICATIONS

"Shpanier Arbeit" — *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of World Textiles, Volume 3: Non-Wovens (Forthcoming)*
Co-Authored with Lily Homer

"Homemade and Hell Raising Through Craft, Activism, and Do-It-Yourself Culture" — *PsychNology Journal, 2013 Volume 11, Number 1, 11 – 20*

CONFERENCES

"Mise en Abyme" Ethnographic Short Film — *South Asian Womanhood and Girlhood Conference*
Loyola University Chicago — *October 28 - 29, 2016*
Presented with Co-Creator Kinza Ejaz — *Chicago, Illinois*

"Craft, the Professional-Amateur, and the Political: On the Creation of a New Place Between the Art/Craft Divide and Activism" — *Technoscience as Activism Conference July 27-29, 2012 Troy, New York*
3Helix Program at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute