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Women's Resiliency, Power, & Leadership:
A Study of Jewish Immigrant Women of the Progressive Era

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
ST. THOMAS

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

By

Ariel Johanna Cohen

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS, MINNESOTA

Women's Resiliency, Power, & Leadership:
A Study of Jewish Immigrant Women of the Progressive Era


We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as meeting departmental criteria for graduation in scope and quality.

We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

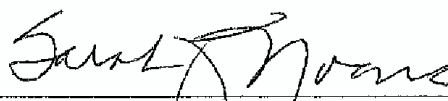
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation study is an historical feminist ethnography with feminist theory analysis. Thematic exploration through qualitative research methodology included women's resiliency, power, and leadership, based on a study of Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era. I focused on characteristics and qualities women exhibited and drew upon to cope and manage their challenging social conditions of lived experience. Women's abilities and strategies included the implementation of a "both/and" model, high level multitasking, relentless and empowering work ethic, entrepreneurial enterprise, and actions endemic to social justice.

Ethnographic research and analysis was the basis I chose for the dissertation study, inductively compiled to provide findings for informing women in other ethnic groups as well as my own. An opportunity arose to learn about women and resources, based on individual and collective strengths of character. Character traits carried them through their daily challenges, and inspired their recurrent state of resiliency, power, and leadership. Course of study placed women in context of their environment and contiguous realities globally and locally.

Themes of resiliency factors were ethnicity, class and culture of the Jewish immigrant group, and skills. I found these factors matched with women's character assets of persistence, effectiveness, adaptability, courage, determination, and relentlessness. Resiliency was sum and substance of their survival, and women internalized habits of courage,

lifted their voices, and propelled themselves forward in lives filled with empowerment.

Regarding women's character asset of power and empowerment, power represented real choices in living life, caring for families, and involving themselves in community. Power influences included freedom, independence, education, and *mazel* (luck). Women exercised moral power with social justice, dedicated to welfare of their community and improvement of their lives and lives of others, thus shaping lives of future generations.

Women's character assets of leadership and effective use of moral power involved substantial leadership talents, skills, and abilities. Capable, powerful women leaders primarily devoted energies to social activism, transformed traditional roles and expectations, and managed practicalities associated with adaptation and assimilation to the American environment and culture.

My intention in this dissertation was to give Jewish immigrant women opportunity to express their voices of power, lament, progress, accomplishment, and victory, in their lived history of the Progressive Era. This dissertation is about women of the past. I approached my research with the intention to educate, inform, and serve women of the present and the future.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

When Jewish immigrant women arrived in New York City at the close of the 19th century, the majority found ready employment with their sewing skills, in the sweatshops of New York's garment industry.

When they worked, the work Jewish women did define them as Jewish women. The image of immigrant girls bent over sewing machines in turn-of-the-century New York tenements rests on the historical reality that, at the end of the first decade of the 20th century, about two-thirds of the female garment workers were Jewish (Nadell, 2003, p. 4).

Jewish immigrant women of the Lower East Side of New York City in the Progressive Era (1880-1920), exhibited remarkable abilities and profound qualities of resiliency and leadership, as they used their personal and professional power for the common good. They did this because they understood the common good was good for the individual, as well as good for the survival of their families, and their children. These women intended to ensure their children would thrive, would be well, and do well, in the land they called the *Goldene Medina*, the Golden Land of America (Telushkin, 2002).

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study is to assess and analyze Jewish women's ability to survive and move toward the future, through the Progressive Era (post 1920) and beyond. I clarified the resources on which they drew and used along with identifying the means that led to their accomplishments. I examined how Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era demonstrated resiliency, power, and leadership. These women exhibited

resilience in maintaining their employment, living their lives, and holding their families together, in a new land and doubly foreign culture. “Jewish women” ... “defined new expressions of how to be simultaneously a Jew, and an American and a woman” (Nadell, 2003, p. 5).

Historians identify Jewishness as ethnicity and culture, in addition to being a religion (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 1976/2004; Lerner, 1997). “Acting to sustain Jewish life in America, Jewish women shaped their faith and their people” (Nadell, 2003, p. 5). Jewish women faced substantial challenges by any measure. They endured difficult and complex working and living conditions, not only surviving, but also thriving.

My study involved assessing and analyzing the ability of Jewish women to survive and move into the future using the resources available to them. I learned how their character and the methods used to accomplish their goals contributed to their success, identifying the qualities, characteristics, and actions taken. My research of the experience resulted in themes related to resiliency, power, and leadership, qualities and characteristics supporting their successful integration into American society and also simultaneous distinction as accomplished Jewish women. My study describes how these themes, and the subsequently identified qualities of character, allowed Jewish women to assimilate successfully, while still holding a cultural identity. My study revealed Jewish women avoided giving up anything of significant importance to them to gain

America. They moved from a “both/and” model, rather than an “either/or” model. “Jewish women constructed identity” (Nadell, 2003, p. 3). They exhibited a strong belief in self, and did not allow time, circumstances, or other agendas to distract them from their purpose of constructing lives in America, steeped in a rich Jewish cultural tradition. These women did not allow anyone else to have power over their path. Their path lived in the Jewish history of origin and purpose.

. “Jewish women saw themselves as empowered to act, to influence, and to define the emerging American Jewish communities” (Nadell, 2003, p. 2). Jewish women exhibited and exercised power and decisive action in their community, largely and with more sustained influence, as compared to women in other minority immigrant communities (Nadell, 2002).

American Jewish women’s empowerment to define their Jewish homes and social organizations, to influence their synagogues and communities, and to construct their work, politics, and culture distinguishes their history from that of other minority women in the United States. (Nadell, 2002, p. 3)

In the dissertation research and process, I found the Jewish women’s resiliency, power, and leadership carried them successfully and remarkably into the future.

Background & Significance of the Study

Takaki’s (1993) description of the immigrant experience of Jewish settlers in *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* engaged my interest and inspired me to study the history of Jewish women in

America. Takaki provided an absorbing description of the women in the garment industry, their living and working conditions, labor union involvement and the Triangle Factory fire tragedy caused me to become irreconcilably and inconsolably absorbed in the historical account of their immigrant heritage experience. I wondered how immigrant women survived and even thrived in those living and working conditions. As I contemplated the research sources, and the stories and voices of these women, I found myself focusing on the characteristics of resiliency, power, and leadership. I questioned what experiences might have driven them to America. I realized this most likely occurred with the persecutions typified as part of the pogroms of Russia and Eastern Europe (Birmingham, 1984; Friedman-Kasaba, 1996). These experiences shaped them, instilled within them values of social justice, and drove them to America (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004; Nadell, 2003; Rischin, 1962/1977).

Ethnography is "...the attempt to describe culture or aspects of culture..." (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This includes an historical examination of feminist leadership, examining how these Jewish immigrant women managed assimilation, while holding and maintaining their cultural and tribal identity (Nadell, 2003). Did they prove to be exceptional in any way? Takaki (1993) spoke to exceptionalism when he said: "The Jews were a 'countryless people.' Their migration to America seemed to be a continuation of a journey that began thousands of years

earlier in Egypt...” (p. 281). The journey began even before they arrived in Egypt, when they left their homeland, under duress of famine to buy grain in Egypt. They eventually settled there, and increased greatly in numbers. The size of the Jewish tribe became a threat to their Egyptian hosts, who enslaved them. Moses finally brought them out of Egypt in the season of Passover and eventually returned them to their homeland, *Eretz Yisrael*, the Promised Land.

Takaki’s (1993) observations on the Jewish immigrant group in his historical account answer some questions and stimulate others. Secretary Henry Cisneros, former head of Housing and Urban Development in the Clinton administration added:

The recognition that Latinos have much to learn from the American Jewish community, for example its facilitation of its immigrants over the last century, the upward progression in American life, including heavy investment in education at the family level and philanthropic strategies built around the concept of *tzedaka* ... The Latino community would do well to learn from that. (Levine, 2011, p. 55)

Secretary Cisneros recognized contributions of the Jewish immigrant community by example to the quality of life and possible future direction of another immigrant group, the Latinos (Levine, 2011). Immigrant cultures can benefit from the lived experiences of other immigrant cultures, as Secretary Cisneros pointed out here. My intention in preparing this dissertation is that this will serve to assist, encourage, and inform women in other immigrant groups, as well as my own. We can never gain too much self-knowledge.

Researcher's Perspective

One of the functions of a researcher in historical methodology is to represent the voice of the research subjects, to tell the story of these Jewish immigrant women (Reinharz, 1992). The researcher can and must delve into the historical past and find the meanings (Marius & Page, 2010; Reinharz, 1992). “To be a Jew means to live in history” (Lerner, 1997, p. 15). My intention was to use the historical research model in order to provide “an ethnographic examination of an actual community...” and create an historical feminist ethnography from the inside (Reinharz, 1992, p. 210).

I am both ethnically and religiously Jewish, both a Jewess and a Modern Orthodox Jewish woman. I am a descendent on my mother's side of Ashkenazi origins and on my father's side of Sephardic origins, and am of the tribe of Levi. There is a family tradition on both sides of being very old in America, with some ancestors having been here since before the American Revolution. I am a *rebbetzin*, the wife of a rabbi, who is a *kohane* [transliteration spelling of the Hebrew], by Jewish tradition a descendant of Aaron, who was the brother of Moses and the first high priest of the Jewish nation. One source defines this as: “Kohen (pl. kohanim) Priest of the Holy Temple; descendent of Aaron” (Staiman, 1997, p. 256).

Definition of Terms

Anti-Semitism “Hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group” (Mish, 2011, p

<i>Assimilate</i>	“To absorb into the culture or mores of a population or group” (Mish, 2011, p. 74)
<i>Bund</i>	“A Jewish Socialist organization founded in czarist Russia in 1897” (Mish, 2011, 164).
<i>Culture</i>	“The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group” (Mish, 2011, p. 304).
<i>Empowerment</i>	“To promote the self-actualization or influence of” (Mish, 2011, p. 409).
<i>Eretz Yisrael</i>	The geographic land of Israel.
<i>Ethnic</i>	“Of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background” (Mish, 2011, p. 429).
<i>Ethnicity</i>	“Ethnic quality or affiliation (aspects of)” (Mish, 2011, p. 429).
<i>Ethnography</i>	“The study and systematic recording of human cultures” (Mish, 2011, p. 429).
<i>Feminism</i>	“The theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes” (Mish, 2011, p. 461).
<i>Gentile</i>	“A person of a non-Jewish nation or of a non-Jewish faith” (Mish, 2011, p. 522).
<i>Goldene Medina</i>	The Golden Land, referring to America (Telushkin, 2002).
<i>Identity</i>	“Oneness,” “individuality,” “the distinguishing character or personality of an individual” (Mish, 2011, p. 616).
<i>Jew</i>	“A member of the tribe of Judah: ISRAELITE; a member of a nation existing in Palestine from the 6 th century BC to the first century AD; a person belonging to a continuation through descent or

	conversion of the ancient Jewish people; one whose religion is Judaism” (Mish, 2011, p. 672).
<i>Kohane/Kohen</i>	“Priest of the Holy Temple; descendent of Aaron” (Staiman, 1997, p. 256).
<i>Kosher</i>	“Selling or serving food ritually fit according to Jewish law” (Mish, 2011, p. 692).
<i>Leadership</i>	“Capacity to lead,” “commanding authority or influence” (Mish, 2011, p.707).
<i>Pogroms</i>	“An organized massacre of helpless people...such as massacre of the Jews” (Mish, 2011, p. 957).
<i>Power</i>	“Ability to act or produce an effect,” “possession of control, authority or influence over others,” “mental and moral efficacy,” (Mish, 2011, p. 973).
<i>Mazel</i>	“A source of influence... in the spiritual realms... associated with ‘good luck’” (Staiman, 1997). To say “Good Mazel” is a common Jewish greeting on auspicious occasions or on any occasion or circumstance, which merits it
<i>Power Motivators</i>	Environmental factors or social conditions, which motivate individuals to take action to change their circumstances for the better
<i>Rabbi</i>	Rabbinic Jewish religious scholar and leader (Ehrlich, 2000, p. 414)
<i>Rebbetzin</i>	Wife of a rabbi (Ehrlich, 2000, p. 414)
<i>Resiliency</i>	“Ability” or the “tending to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change” (Mish, 2011, p. 1060).
<i>Shochet</i>	Ritual slaughterer of <i>kosher</i> meat (Ehrlich, 2000, p. 288).
<i>Shtetl</i>	“The <i>shtetl</i> nestled in the crevices of a backyard agricultural economy, where Jews, often prohibited from ownership of land, had to live by trading, artisanship, and their wits,” and “...the relations between the social strata of the shtetl came to little more than a difference between the poor and the

	hopelessly poor” (Howe, 2004, p 10). The shtetl was a Jewish settlement.
<i>Spiel</i>	“A voluble line of often extravagant talk: pitch” (Mish, 2011, p. 1201).
<i>Tachlis</i>	Purpose (as in giving meaning to life)
<i>Tzedaka</i>	Charity (Staiman, 1997, p. 263).
<i>Yiddish</i>	A language combination of German and Hebrew, specific to the Eastern European Jewish population (Howe, 2004; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993).
<i>Yiddiskeit</i>	“The prevalence of Yiddish as the language of the east European Jews and by the growth among them of a culture resting mainly on that language...a way of life...a shared experience, which goes beyond opinion or ideology” (Howe, 2004, p. 16).
<i>Zionism</i>	“An international movement originally for the establishment of a Jewish national or religious community in Palestine and later for the support of modern Israel” (Mish, 2011, p. 1457).

Nota Bene: In the research exploration of ethnicity and culture, I found there was inevitable overlapping of meaning and description, as these characteristics do intertwine, connect, and align in a specific population of so connected individuals. Merriam-Webster’s Eleventh Edition Collegiate Dictionary (2011) defined ethnic as “of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background,” and ethnicity as “ethnic quality or affiliation (aspects of)” (Mish, 2011, p. 429). The definition of ethnography in this source was “the study and systematic recording of human cultures” (Mish, 2011, p. 429).

Qualitative research scholars, Bogdan and Biklen (1982/2007) essentially described ethnography as a qualitative research process focused on culture. A review of these definitions demonstrated that separating social constructs of ethnicity and culture decisively might even confound the experts. Therefore, in the course of this dissertation, I made the best of attempts to distinguish or clarify meanings, while acknowledging that overlaps inevitably occurred.

Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation consists of seven chapters beginning with an Introduction and Overview, Research Methodology, and World Events of the Progressive Era, which frames the experience of the women. This precedes three thematic chapters on Women's Resiliency, Women's Power, and Women's Leadership. The final chapter includes the dissertation Summary and Conclusions and recommendations for further study.

Chapter two of this dissertation consists of a review and clarification of the dissertation's research methodology and the types of research sources. I adopted historical and feminist research methods, producing an historical feminist ethnography on immigrant Jewish women of the Progressive Era. I described methods of organizing the data and then adopted feminist theory for analysis.

In chapter three, I provide historical accounts of world events, as well as some local ones, occurring in the Progressive Era, and exerting some direct or indirect influence in the lives of the Jewish immigrant women. These events specifically include: the pogroms of Russia and Poland, labor strikes, the Panic of 1893, the Dreyfus Affair, World War I, the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Flu Pandemic of 1918, and Women's Suffrage. All of these events had some impact on the American Jewish community, and specifically on the women of the community,

contributing to their existential challenges found in the immigrant experience.

Chapter four begins the description of the first of three themes found in my study, women's resiliency, power, and leadership. Beginning with the focus on the women's character asset of resiliency, I describe or show how ethnicity, immigrant class/culture and skills all were associated with the characteristic of resiliency. The women's persistence, effectiveness, adaptability, courage, determination, and relentlessness all contributed significantly to their progress. Their resiliency was the sum and substance of their survival, and through their challenging experiences, the women internalized a habit of courage. Their habit of courage lifted their voices and propelled them forward in lives filled with resiliency and empowerment.

The focus of chapter five is the women's character asset of power and empowerment. For these Jewish immigrant women, power represented real choices about how they lived their lives, cared for their families, and involved themselves in their community. They took advantage of conditions, like freedom, independence, and education, and mazel— luck. These women exercised moral power in their commitment to social justice, and to the welfare of their community, as the power of the social constructions they encountered profoundly affected the quality of their lives. The Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era exercised

their moral power to improve their lives and the lives of those around them, shaping the life of their community for future generations.

Chapter six focuses on the women's character asset of leadership and the women's effective use of moral power, including their substantial leadership talents, skills, and abilities. The Jewish immigrant community had capable and powerful women leaders, some more publicly prominent than others, who primarily devoted their energies to social activism. Jewish women, authentic, vibrant, and complex in their identities as mothers and workers, transformed traditional roles and expectations and moved forward, as the pertinent political and economic social constructs influenced their identities and behaviors. The Jewish immigrant women found they could fulfill essential traditional roles, while at the same time meeting practical necessities associated with adaptation and assimilation to their new American environment and culture.

A summary and conclusion, including a description of the strengths and limitations of my study, and implications for theory, research, and practice can be found in the final chapter. My goal in conducting the research and writing my dissertation was to give Jewish immigrant women the opportunity to express themselves, their voice, in the history they lived during the Progressive Era. Although this dissertation is about women of the past, I designed the study to educate, inform, and serve women of the present and the future.

Summary

I conducted an historical study of Jewish women during the Progressive Era. I utilized historical and feminist research methods to produce an historical feminist ethnography on immigrant Jewish women of the Progressive Era. Using feminist theory to analyze my data, I engaged in I engaged in ethnographic research and analysis. The study was important because I inductively compiled research findings to inform women in other ethnic groups as well as my own. I appreciated this opportunity to learn about women and their resources, based on their individual and collectives strengths of character. I organized my findings based on the characteristics, qualities, and accomplishments of Jewish women into three themes of resiliency, power, and leadership.

In the next chapter, I have provided a complete description and discussion of research methodologies, including historical and feminist approaches, and applications of the feminist analytical lens. I have addressed both researcher and personal bias, and provided details of the research process.

CHAPTER TWO RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I conducted a study of Jewish women to identify ways in which they moved through the Progressive Era and built a foundation for future generations. I based my study on a combination of historical research and feminist research models, thus producing an historical feminist ethnography on immigrant Jewish women of the Progressive Era. I used these in combination with feminist theory for analysis of my data, enabling me to identify three significant themes in the experience of Jewish women, namely resiliency, power, and leadership.

I describe an overview of research methods, followed by historical research methods. I then discuss feminist research methods and later the feminist theoretical lens. I conclude with a summary of the combined research methodologies process.

Overview of Methods

I began the research process with secondary sources and the research question, “How did Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era demonstrate resiliency, power, and leadership?” Next, I moved through secondary to primary sources, from which I studied, formulated, discovered, and illuminated my study’s own analysis and subsequent conclusions. I began with historical research methodology as a base or framework, which I extended, expanded and explored with feminist research methodology. I found feminist methods, including the feminist analytical lens, enlarged, and focused the study simultaneously.

In the process of the study, a metaphor emerged for my research methods. The metaphor came from the *Tanach*, the Hebrew Scriptures, in the Book of the Prophet *Yehezkiel* (Ezekiel), Chapter 37, of his vision in the Valley of the Dry Bones (Scherman, 1996/1999). Yehezkiel saw dry bones on the ground that came back to life before him, as the bones re-articulated and stood upright and muscle and skin returned to them, and they moved in life again.

In the course of my research methodology process and in the context of this metaphor, the historical research methods functioned in joining the bones together, providing foundational structure for my study's content and findings. The feminist research methods provided the flesh and the skin, filling in the detail, while embellishing, enlarging, and articulating my view of the women in my study. The feminist theory analytical lens instilled the life force in the lives and times of the women as they came to life for me in the course of my study. The research methods in combination in this study have raised the voices of the Jewish women of the Progressive Era and brought them back to life.

Initially, I used search techniques to facilitate the research process beginning with key words, Boolean methods, etc. and the time limiting span of years 1880-1920 to explore these issues. As I identified more search areas/topics, these included the influence and involvement of labor unions in their lives, and the ways in which they acted to survive and to improve their situations. As I developed and pursued the literature search,

my inductive search uncovered themes in three predominant qualities associated with these women and their immigrant journey. These qualities, which lent themselves to thorough exploration, were their resiliency, power, and leadership in their own lives and in their community.

My initial research gave me some understanding of the immigrant or Jewish experience on the Lower East Side of New York. I began to see how work in the garment industry could possibly look good to them. Takaki's (1993) account of the immigrant Jewish women and my curiosity regarding how they survived caused me to explore their experience in the *Goldene Medina*, the Golden Land of Promise, America (Telushkin, 2002). An obvious place for me to begin was by looking at the power and influence of social constructions on the lives of these women, the reasons they came to America and their living and working conditions in the Lower East Side of New York City. This included their adjustments to the American way of life. In addition, there was the opportunity to investigate the possibility and nature of exceptionalism in the Jewish immigrant group, with consultation of many sources in the process. My exploration of the pertinent literature sources associated with social constructions of the times took into account ethnicity, immigrant class/culture, skills, gender, and benevolent societies/unions. Research sources included: books; journal and newspaper articles; biographies and autobiographies;

histories; published letters; reproduced photographs, sketches, and maps; websites, and a compact disc.

With the assistance of two research librarians, I focused my search on archival sources in the bibliographies, resource lists, and indexes of both primary and secondary sources, along with The American Jewish Archives, The American Jewish Historical Society Archives, the Tenement Museum resources in New York City, and the Triangle Factory Fire Archive. Any limitations or personal bias/connectedness to the research question and process of the research, which I could identify, I have disclosed in the Researcher's Bias section. In my perusal and consideration of the content of the research sources, I was aware of both my inductive and deductive thought processes, as I monitored my tendency to move to the deductive side and entertain premature judgment of findings. My awareness and understanding of qualitative research methodology was critical to my staying on track with an inductive research experience.

I consciously disciplined myself to maintain thematic focus, so I could effectively manage the historical data. I employed a thematic coding process primarily to manage the historical data resources (Storey, 2009). I thematically aligned and coded the types of sources. This made it possible for me to confidently compare and contrast historical accounts, as well as the interpretations of various historians.

Another area, to which I conscientiously attended, was in the handling of the resources with care and respect. This included rigorous methodology for taking notes from sources, and using quotations and paging carefully and judiciously, as I was aware I was summarizing and paraphrasing the sources (Storey, 2009). I implemented a careful process, understanding it was best to err on the side of vigilant caution. I also recognized the inevitable bias and misinformation potential of the research sources, including the fact that even the most exhaustive accounts are still not perfectly complete (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). I understood “the central paradox of our profession: historians are prisoners of sources that can never be made fully reliable” (Howell & Prevenier, 2001, p. 3). For this reason, I assessed, evaluated, and analyzed sources, in order to determine that most important measure of “reliability” (Howell & Prevenier, 2001, p. 2). I know now that inference plays a strong role in the historical analytical process.

The function of inference in historical methodology was most important to me in order to create a logical bridge between sources, and to enable a conclusive convergence of sources, which was integral to my dissertation’s comparisons and analysis. According to Storey (2009), “An inference is more than just a hunch. It is an intelligent conclusion based on the examination and comparison of evidence ... historians also suggest probable interpretations by using their sources to make inferences” (p. 53).

I understood that part and parcel of my inference process was the verification of sources: the comparison of types—primary or secondary—and the origins, facts and contradictions (Storey, 2009). I identified both deductive and inductive reasoning processes in the sources, and used the inferences to uncover divergent theoretical points of view (Storey, 2009). I was aware that with the inductive process, one begins with the parts, taken as evidence, and draws conclusions about them, while with the deductive process, one begins with a logical conclusion or generalization and orders or classifies the parts accordingly (Storey, 2009).

My intention was to create a dissertation study, utilizing an historical research model in combination with a feminist research model, to produce an historical feminist ethnography on immigrant Jewish women of the Progressive Era. I structured my dissertation as an historical ethnography with phenomenological aspects, understanding from scholarly sources that ethnography and phenomenology are recognized feminist research methods (Reinhartz, 1992). My intention was to identify any particular wisdom, which I could derive from the themes and concepts uncovered through my research—these angles and perspectives—which had substance and power to imply meaning, to inform and enhance the historical view of these women and their voices. The voices of the women spoke through their experiences, challenges, decisions, actions, and wisdom, which was evident in both their individual and collective stories. As I learned that much of feminist research

contributions are associated with making up for lack of any research-based findings associated with women, or with any sort of feminist perspective, I consciously focused my research methodology efforts to address these issues (Reinhartz, 1992).

Historical Research Methods

“History is more than a collective memory; it is a memory formed and shaped so as to have meaning” (Lerner, 1997, p. 116). Historical methodology is associated with communicating effective and convincing theoretical arguments, within the context of historical analysis (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). The purpose of historical research is to discover findings, which will enhance the meaning of the past, highlight matters in the present, and inform the direction and the choices of the future. Historical methodology relies on the historian for accurate representations of historical events and personalities (Howell & Prevenier, 2001).

Historical research methodology was both the context and the core for the gathering of information of my study, the analysis of findings, and the identification of inductive conclusions. In using this methodology, my intention was to communicate effective, convincing theoretical arguments, in the context of historical analysis. I utilized a combination of historical research methodology with feminist research methodology to fully address and represent the themes and meanings of the voices and lives of the women in this immigrant group.

Due to the combination of research models, it was possible for me to know what I could not otherwise have realized and documented about my research subjects. The combination of methods at this level provided the essential definitions, descriptions, and discernment of research findings. Through my exploration of the historical sources, it became possible to derive lessons and glean examples associated with the qualities of resiliency, power, and leadership, and to develop recommendations regarding these to other groups of women, in current times and places for possible benefit.

Feminist Research Methods

Next, in the research process for this study, I drew on feminist theoretical and analytical lenses in order to inform the dissertation process regarding both gender and human qualities and characteristics (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005; Lerner, 1997; Reinhartz, 1992). These sources did assist in especially delineating and illuminating the inventiveness and the achievements of the immigrant Jewish women in the circumstances of their lives (Cohen, 1995; Spewack, 1995; Nadell, 2003; Orleck, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967).

What distinguishes feminist research from other forms of research is its devotion to women and to issues associated with women, or matters of interest or concern to women (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005; Reinhartz, 1992). For this reason, feminist research was an obvious choice for me to pair with historical research methodology in my study of Jewish

immigrant women of the Progressive Era. I investigated aspects of feminist theory in association with the concepts of resiliency, power, and feminist leadership, associated with female Jewish identity, sensitivity to and valuation of social justice, and the impact of social constructions on these women's lives, all in the context of meaning.

Priorities in feminist research include recognition that “there are women's *ways of knowing*” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 4). The sources I reviewed particularly provided evidence of women's exclusive perspectives, especially autobiographical sources for this study. Autobiographical sources included Rose Cohen (1995), Bella Spewack (1995) and Rose Schneiderman (1967). All three of these women shared similar life experiences, in their daily lives as Jewish women immigrants on the Lower East Side of New York City. Their experiences also aligned with other research sources. I used examples from their lives throughout this study.

Feminist researchers commit to “giving voice” to the women subjects of their research, because historical descriptions of women's experiences and perspectives have been largely ignored and essentially undocumented or unstudied over time (Reinharz, 1992). Feminist researchers today literally chart the course of feminist research, associated with the feminist concepts of “the right to be educated ...to be educators ... the right to create knowledge” (Reinharz, 1992, p.11). Feminist

researchers define, and even determine, the nature, methods, meanings, purposes, applications, and interpretations of feminist research.

All aspects of feminist theoretical discourse focus on the areas of social conditions, economics, politics, and gender issues thematically, but as Reinharz (1992) pointed out, there are many differences of emphasis and expression associated with feminist theory and feminism. “That these differences exist is fortunate because the lack of orthodoxy allows for freedom of thought and action,” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 6). In utilizing feminist theory, I recognized feminist focused analytical research does not require tight definition, anymore than feminism does. No hegemonic authority is empowered to set others right, on who is, and who is not a feminist (Reinharz, 1992).

For my research and analysis purposes, I saw women, by their choice, could fulfill traditional family roles, and still assert feminist qualities of resiliency, power, and leadership. This is an example of a “both/and” model, rather than an “either/or” choice. In the research process, my intention was to derive the qualities of the Jewish immigrant women’s characters, the value of their experiences, and the meanings of their lives, as they demonstrated their resiliency, power, and leadership for their survival and for the perpetuation of their tribe in the *Goldene Medina* of America. Jewish women’s voices are individual and collective, primal and current. The Jewish immigrant women in my study possessed knowledge and experience, especially about how to be women in the give

and take of the day-to-day, and year-to-year. I saw their experiences as valid, and through this study, these experiences provide understanding for women now and into the future. Therefore, experiences of these Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era— the voices of these women— legitimately and profoundly mattered then and do so now.

My mega-purpose for this dissertation was to give these Jewish women the opportunity to “play a starring role rather than a walk-on part” in the history, which they lived during the Progressive Era (Witt, 2000/2007, p. 11). This study is about Jewish women of the past. However, I have primarily designed and intended for the research content and findings of this study to educate, inform, and serve any women of the present and the future.

May we hear and may we understand...

Feminist Theoretical Lens

I chose to use the feminist theoretical lens in order to draw out the feminist qualities and characteristics from the historical and feminist methodologies, which contributed to the success of these Jewish women. Nadell (2003) brought new concepts to light regarding the role of Jewish women in shaping the American Jewish identity and culture. In Nadell’s (2003) introduction to her edited collection of writings, she spoke about the creativity of Jewish women and their exertion of power to inform and shape an American Jewish identity, not only for themselves, but also for

their families, and for Jewish cultural identity in America, as they defined the parameters of American Jewish life.

American Jewish women's empowerment to define their Jewish home and social organizations, to influence their synagogues and communities, and to construct their work, politics, and culture distinguishes their history from that of other minority women in the United States. (Nadell 2003, p. 3)

Nadell's (2003) edited collection had a number of examples of Jewish women taking action that was transformational. One of these was the story of the first women's Zionist organization, where Antler (2003) described the founder, Henrietta Szold as having enacted "...a truly revolutionary transformation in traditional notions of Jewish women's roles" (p. 129). The voluntary transformation of Jewish women's roles, as I viewed this process through the feminist analytical lens, contributed to the research findings and gave voice to the women.

Mega-Structure & Meta-Analysis Process

I induced some mega-structure and meta-analysis findings from the autobiographies of Cohen (1995), Schneiderman (1967), and Spewack (1995). All three women experienced changing home locations repeatedly in order to survive and to improve their conditions. All had boarders, at various times and in varying numbers, in their living quarters in order to supplement living costs. The mothers of the three women were working constantly for the survival and protection of their children. Clearly, the mothers focused on improving their daughters' educational opportunities and socio-economic conditions.

Cohen (1995), Schneiderman (1967), and Spewack (1995) passionately and relentlessly pursued every educational opportunity, both formal and informal, entirely to their benefit and ultimately, the benefit of all the lives they touched. The three women benefitted from charitable support in their childhood years. At the same time they felt shame, and experienced loss of face, and loss of self-respect as a result, which likely inspired them to move forward to self-sufficiency in their lives. These women particularly appreciated and relished their opportunities to be out in nature and away from the city environment, and they clearly experienced some form of restoration, healing, and rejuvenated resiliency from the experiences.

Mega-structure and meta-analysis examples I induced from other research sources included the impression that the pogroms saved a remnant of Jews from the Holocaust, by driving them out of Eastern Europe and Russia. This was before Hitler's forces took over all of the areas where Jewish populations had been concentrated by the Russian authorities. The Nazis murdered the Jews on the spot or shipped them to concentration camps in order to implement The Final Solution, the annihilation of the Jewish people.

In another example, the Triangle Factory fire tragedy generated social justice inspired changes associated with fire and safety codes, improved working conditions, and status for garment workers; also, it brought forth feminist leaders for social justice. For the new immigrants

the challenge of assimilation/acculturation represented the threat of a disintegrated ethnic and cultural community. Instead, the influence of freedom brought Jewish women leaders forward to public roles.

Employers indeed exploited Jewish immigrant women in their working conditions. At the same time, they were able to find work immediately; even the next day after arrival on American shores, an exceptional circumstance for any new immigrant.

Worth noting in this vein, is one of the views Birmingham (1984) provided of the Lower East Side, in what appeared as “violent social upheaval” but turned out quite differently:

To the disinterested outside visitor, the Lower East Side in the early 1900s would have appeared utterly chaotic, and nothing been foreseen to come out of it except disaster—or, at the very least, some sort of violent social upheaval or revolution. And yet this is not what happened at all. Instead, out of it came artists, writers, lawyers, politicians, entertainers, and businessmen. (Birmingham, 1984, p. 32)

Another example of this type is the communication Miss Richman, the elementary school principal, gave to her staff regarding the characteristics of Jewish students: “overdevelopment of mind... keen intellectualism ... impatience... extremely radical” (Birmingham, 1984, p. 26). Perhaps with my own bias, I believe these challenging or negative qualities, these character defects, were in fact gifts out of balance. I believe the educational and intellectual accomplishments and societal contributions from this group endorse this view. These are all examples of obstacles, and even tragedies, which turned to some positive effect and

moved individual women forward in the Jewish immigrant group, as they brought their community with them.

Researcher Bias

Historical research method provided a process for me to experience clear, concise, accurate and even sympathetic or critical treatment of this historical subject. At the same time, I understood the best attempts at clarity, conciseness, and accuracy were inevitably subjective, even with my most disciplined, valiant attempts at objectivity (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Historical methodology demanded that I chose my perspective, emphasis, focus, and conclusions (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). I did this in the context of identifying my subjects, themes, and hypotheses, and mostly by my questions (Marius & Page, 2010).

I understood from historical methodology resources the importance placed on ethical considerations in the research process. Even though I came to the research experience from my own individual view or perspective, I was under the expectation that I would represent the history aligned with the facts, to the best of my investigation and ability (Marius & Page, 2010; Storey, 2009). In the production of this study, my academic research and documentation was interdependent and reliant, and therefore I was relying on the sources, which had come before (Storey, 2009).

My historical research experience/process turned and evolved through my questions (Storey, 1996/2009). “Who,” “what,” “why,” “where,” and “when” questions led me to the evolution and revelation of my dissertation hypothesis, analysis, and conclusions (Marius & Page, 2010, p. 9). By exploring sources, and continuing to question, my hypothesis evolved into my thesis and historical interpretation or argument (Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Marius & Page, 2010; Storey, 2009). According to Marius and Page (2010), “the art of history lies in combining fact and interpretation to tell a story about the past” (p.3). Therefore, I also experienced the issue of focus, of being able to stay on track, in the research and writing processes.

I experienced the particular challenge for the devotee of historical sources, which was to avoid detours into enticing documents, concepts, or previously unknown information (Marius & Page, 2010; Storey, 2009). The additional potential opportunities for exploration were enticing to me, as it was natural for me to want to explore these potential avenues. These areas are inspiration for me, for further research in the future.

First, I believe feminist research matters because I am a woman and believe our world views, experiences, opinions, wisdom, and voices have merit. Second, feminist research matters because half the world is populated by women, and women merit the same sort of opportunity for research study, enlightenment, importance and inclusion over time, which men have had available to them. In general, the documentation in

historical accounts, as well as data and knowledge based on research, show a profound absence of women and women's issues, as late as the 1970s (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005; Nadell, 2003; Reinhartz, 1992). Considering the importance society places on history and associated traditions, and on research knowledge for decision-making, for me this fact subtly communicates the lack of importance women have in American society. In line with my bias, perhaps this lack suggests other matters and concerns have occupied women's attentions, rather than justifying their existence or exalting their accomplishments through recorded documents. Perhaps women raising the boys preoccupied women; boys who would become men, who would write history and conduct research. This still does not explain the absence of Jewish women's history, as Jewish women are ultimate well-educated and verbally-skilled multitaskers.

From the 1970s into the early 1990s, historians consistently excluded Jewish women from the multicultural writings on minority women in the feminist movement's documentation of ethnic histories (Nadell, 2003). The multicultural group regarded Jewish women as White and privileged (Nadell, 2003). This meant feminists virtually ignored the profound history of the Jewish people, and specifically of Jewish women, filled with persecution and tragedy based on ethnicity, gender, and religion. They were not conscious of the fact, which I personally am well aware of, that in the world of prejudice and discrimination, if a woman is a Jewess, it does not matter what color her skin is.

As a member of the Jewish community, I am aware of the prevailing wisdom that in order to “fit in” to the American culture. These women needed to fly under the minority radar wherever and whenever possible; and avoid calling attention to the ethnic, religious, and cultural differences. This was an on-going tribal endeavor to avoid the social triggers of anti-Semitism, such as Jews being too numerous, too studious, too intelligent, too crafty, too skillful in business, too successful, too pushy, too different, too much of whatever (Takaki, 1993). This is the *modus operandi* of assimilation into a culture and a society practiced by the Jewish community. Consequently, this might also be one of the reasons there was no Jewish women’s history until the 1990s.

By the 1990s, restrictions on appearing to be different in American society had eased, as enough generational time had passed, the Civil Rights Movement legislation and enforcement (thanks to those Jewish lawyers) disempowered the Ku Klux Klan, and pogroms were of the past. Hence, Jewish women began to represent themselves publicly as distinct and began to explore their American origins and religious diversity in public and in print. I was one of those women. Jewish women writers still carefully avoid the subject of ethnicity, while they push religion and culture to the forefront, as America is weak on protecting the rights of ethnic minorities, but strong on protecting freedom of religion and cultural practices. Because of my feminist research experience, my view now is that *the feminist historical research method might be the most important,*

due to the glaring absence of accounts of women, and women's perspectives, in all ancient and modern historical accounts.

Limitations

Historically, the Progressive Era was only a snapshot in the continuum of Jewish history. By selecting only one geographical location, the American continent, I limited other simultaneous events in Jewish history occurring throughout the world. I focused my study only on one group/type of immigrant women, and therefore only truly represented this group in this particular time and place. Jews are unique in their ability to sustain a powerfully cohesive, insular group with tribal identity, which may not be representative of other immigrant groups. My study only covers a 40-year span, a very small space of time in the course of history in general and for this immigrant group in particular, whose tribal history extends over the past 4000 years. The focus of my research was the American experience and the context or background leading up to and precipitating the immigration. I did not find other studies of other immigration experiences or countries for comparison. I could not directly interview participants; as there was no one still living, who had been a member of the immigrant group.

My own bias and preconceived notions regarding the subject matter of the research sources were in play, as I consciously worked to compartmentalize my past views and search for new perspectives. This is a complete, but not exhaustive, description of the limitations of this

research study and dissertation. I have listed future research opportunities in the appropriate section, areas which I did not address in this study, and which may move the research subject and content beyond these limits.

Summary

In the research process, I employed inductive thought processes in the review and analysis of the research data, according to qualitative research methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As described by Bogdan and Biklen, I vigilantly paid attention to my own bias.

The researcher spends a considerable amount of time in the empirical world laboriously collecting and reviewing piles of data. The data must bear the weight of any interpretation, so the researcher must continually confront his or her own opinions and prejudices with the data (p. 37).

I carefully followed this research process, recognizing the potential and the temptation to embellish my own preconceived notions and opinions with the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I recognized it is imperative to allow the research findings to inform the research process and analysis, rather than my own opinions to do so, in order to attain the most reliable outcomes from the research process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). My research subjects for this dissertation are no longer living. Therefore, primary sources came through their documented voices and recorded lived experiences, including autobiographical sources and written document translations, as I had to "...rely on evidence from the past" (Marius & Page, 2010, p. 4). My intention was to create a dissertation study, utilizing an historical research model in combination with a feminist research

model, to produce an historical feminist ethnography on immigrant Jewish women of the Progressive Era. In addition, I utilized a feminist theory approach for the dissertation study analysis. This combination of historical and feminist research methodology, combined with feminist theory analysis, enabled the discoveries and conclusions in this dissertation study regarding the characteristics, qualities, and accomplishments—the resiliency, power, and leadership of this female immigrant group.

CHAPTER THREE

WORLD EVENTS: FRAMING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE

The historic period of 1880-1920 in America, was a time of rapid change and powerful movement of population; known as the Progressive Era (Takaki, 1993). Substantial numbers of immigrant minorities were arriving in America. The coastal ends of the country were coming into their own characteristics and purposes (Takaki, 1993). In New York City, the Lower East Side was home to the burgeoning immigrant Jewish population (Diner, 2000; Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993). “By 1913...the city’s Jewish residents outnumbered the population of the entire city in 1870” (Haw, 2005). Several events had an impact on the Jewish population and the Jewish women particularly. These included: the Pogroms of Eastern Europe and Russia (1880-1920); the Labor Strikes in America and Russia (1880-1920); Economic Depression and the Panic of 1893; the Dreyfus Affair (1895); World War I (1914-1918); the Russian Revolution of 1917; the Flu Pandemic of 1918, and Women’s Suffrage in America (1920). Women’s experiences in the historical accounts of these events are absent from many published accounts. The purpose of this chapter is to expand on historical knowledge, assessment, and analysis of immigrant Jewish women on the Lower East Side of New York, during the years 1880-1920, the Progressive Era.

An important event affecting Jewish women of the Progressive Era involved the pogroms, the organized attacks on Jews and Jewish communities in different parts of the world, and specifically in Russia and

Poland. These events and subsequent circumstances drove many Jews to abandon their homes and lives in Russia and Poland, where they had been for centuries. They sought refuge in many locations – including America, specifically New York (Diner, 2004; Sorin, 1992).

The Pogroms: 1880-1920

America looked good to Jewish women in Russia and Eastern Europe. The hardships of the Lower East Side and the garment district working conditions did not seem so bad when compared to those in other countries, such as Russia and Poland. Living conditions and working conditions were even more severe for Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe (Diner, 2004; Sorin, 1992). Members of the Jewish community in Russia and Eastern Europe experienced extremely crowded, highly competitive working conditions, as the authorities restricted Jews to living in concentrated masses in certain areas, in *shtetls*. There were dire living conditions, due to the pogroms. Pogroms were attacks by Gentiles against the Jews characterized by “massacres of Jews and the destruction of their shops and synagogues,” resulting in a state of constant alarm and terror (Takaki, 1993, p. 278). The authorities associated pogrom activity with both national and local political needs, for purposes of scapegoating members of the Jewish community (Birmingham, 1984; Figes, 1996; Mamet, 1995; Pipes, 1990; Rischin, 1962/1977). “Life in the Jewish towns and villages was also intensely insecure, for anti-Semitic violence was a ubiquitous reality in the shtetl” (Takaki, 1993, p. 278). The

authorities subjected the Jewish community to relentless violence (Figes, 1996; Pipes, 1990).

Jews of Russia and Eastern Europe were “political refugees” (Takaki, 1993, p. 277). According to Abraham Cahan, the Russian government, including the Tsar, instigated the pogroms in order to direct attention away from the country’s problems by scapegoating the Jewish population (Takaki, 1993). Commoners accepted government propaganda implicating the Jews as the source of the country’s problems. “Almost everywhere, government officials encouraged acts of violence against Jews” (Takaki, 1993, p. 277). Cahan indicated the pogroms forced members of the Jewish community to accept that Russia was no longer a viable home for them, and they would have to seek refuge elsewhere (Takaki, 1993).

“Jews migrated to America because of pogroms” (Diner, 2000). America was the answer. America was “the Golden Land” of unrestricted opportunity and compensated labor (Takaki, 1993, p. 279).

At a sewing school in Minsk, Jewish girls received letters from America describing astonishingly high wages—the starting pay for a seamstress in New York was four dollars a week, a sum equal to a month’s earnings in (Russian) rubles (Takaki, 1993, p. 279).

Millions left everything behind to seek a new start in America, fleeing both poverty and relentless assaults (Diner, 2004; Sorin, 1992).

“With a strength born of cultural renewal, they aspired also to accomplish something. The United States as a land of opportunity—and fortunately in a period of industrial expansion and economic growth—provided the context for fulfilling this dream” (Sorin, 1992, p. 37). Unlike the members of other immigrant groups, it was clear to the Jews they were leaving their lives behind. There was no home for them in Russia or Eastern Europe, to which they could or would return (Diner, 2000; Takaki, 1993).

The tsar’s advisor, his former tutor...now chief procurator of the Holy Synod, vowed that one-third of Jews would convert to the (Russian) Orthodox Church, one-third would emigrate, and one-third would starve to death. Here was the stimulus for the great late-nineteenth century Jewish exodus from Russia (Schneer, 2010, p. 10).

This decree intentionally and inevitably spelled an end to Russian Jewish life and culture (Sachar, 1976/1996). American Jews with political influence also interceded with U.S. government officials to monitor the situation in Russia and to intervene as much as possible in the event of persecutions and pogroms (Diner, 1992).

The pogroms, along with individual or single assaults of violence and destruction were the nightmares and day terrors of the Jewish communities of Russia and Poland. Immigrant Jewish women on the Lower East Side originated in, emigrated from these regions, and had experience with these events, either directly or through reports (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993). The threats, cruelties and tortures associated with the pogroms were difficult to contemplate and

beyond tolerance to endure (Birmingham, 1984). There was always concern for the family members left behind by the immigrants (Howe, 2004). These conditions in the old country inspired the women's gratitude and acceptance, as they faced and coped with living and working conditions on the Lower East Side of New York (Howe, 2004).

Next, the Jewish immigrant women participated in the labor strikes occurring in America, primarily within their world of the garment industry (Orleck, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967). The women took many heroic actions associated with labor strikes and adverse working conditions. Jewish women leaders were instrumental in turning the tide of labor conditions in America (Schneiderman, 1967).

Labor Strikes in America and Russia—1880-1920

Numerous labor strikes within all sorts of industries and services occurred in America and Russia throughout the Progressive Era. Two of the strikes, located in New York, were the Buffalo Switchmen's Strike of 1888 and the Newsboys Strike in New York City in 1899. One did not involve the immigrant Jewish women, while the other did indirectly. Reviewing these will give some broader context to strike events in America and examine union activities outside of the garment industry, for the purposes of historical context for this dissertation.

Buffalo Switchmen's Strike in Buffalo, NY—1888

The switchmen organized to challenge their current wages, associated with a change in labor law hours (Foner, 1955; Voorhees,

1892). The increase amounted to 10% of current wages, which the railroad management denied, and a strike ensued (Voorhees, 1892). Local authorities attempted through law enforcement to contain the disruptions caused by the strikers. However, between sympathies of officers and diverse areas and activities of the strikers, local authorities thought it necessary to resort first to the militia, and then to the National Guard, as they assessed the properties involved at \$19,000,000.00 (Foner, 1955; Voorhees, 1892).

When the State Board of Mediation and Arbitration became involved, the railroad was not willing to participate. Having discharged and replaced all the strikers, they contended it to be a non-issue, as they had no conflict with their current employees. When the strike leaders failed to enlist other railroad employee groups into a sympathy strike, and the threats, intimidation and property destruction caused by the strikers was not sufficient to bring about engagement or settlement from the railroad authorities, the union officials called off the strike (Foner, 1955; Voorhees, 1892). The failed strike was due to the inability of the various union brotherhoods to present a fully united front to management (Foner, 1955). “The lesson of the Buffalo strike further shows the hopelessness of any strike that, first, does not have the sympathy, support and countenance of the press; and second, of any strike that depends in any measure whatever for success on possible violence or intimidation” (Voorhees, 1892, p. 415).

The Buffalo Switchmen's Strike lacked legitimacy and support. Strikes are successful, when the weight of fairness and public opinion is behind them, and responsible union officials exhaust every possible option before resorting to strike actions (Voorhees, 1892). Employers are wise to consider some sort of benefit program for employees, in order for employees to feel invested in the welfare of the company, and therefore even less motivated to strike (Voorhees, 1892). Next is the Newsboys Strike, which did involve the Jewish immigrant women, as the newsboys were their sons.

Newsboys Strike in NYC—1899

The Newsboys Strike was over a penny, an additional penny, the newspaper companies decided to charge the children, who sold newspapers on the streets of New York City (Brown, 2004; Hoose, 2001). The children understood they would have to absorb the cost increase out of their earnings, and they made a decision to go on strike, rather than absorb this additional cost (Brown, 2004). Community members called the children "newsies," and there were thousands of them (see Appendix B) (Brown, 2004. p. 2). The boys sold *The World* and *The Journal* for a penny per paper, while they purchased the newspapers at a cost of five cents per ten copies. The newsies formed a union, complete with elected officials and committees (Hoose, 2001). Three hundred child union members demonstrated initially, with the strike effort being broken up by law enforcement, and a few of the children were temporarily jailed

(Brown, 2004). Demonstrations continued, and the strike effort grew to include suburbs and even part of the state of New Jersey. The strike eventually extended along the East Coast, including parts of Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Kentucky (Brown, 2004; Hoose, 2001). “The strike was violent: the newspapers hired men to protect the newspaper deliveries and there were fights using fists and clubs and reports of threats involving revolvers” (Brown, 2004, p. 30).

The newsies managed effectively to interfere with delivery and distribution of the newspapers, garnering strength and support from the adult population, who contributed funds to them. The children were able substantially to reduce newspaper distribution numbers, which resulted in a strike compromise. The newspaper companies offered to buy back any newspapers the children could not sell (Brown, 2004). This represented enough of a monetary gain for the newsies, that they accepted the compromise and re-engaged in their jobs of newspaper distribution and sales (Brown, 2004; Hoose, 2001). *The New York Times* and *The New York Tribune* did not instigate a price increase, so they were not part of the strike effort of the newsies.

The newsies were from immigrant families, living in the tenements, and their earnings were critical to their family’s economic survival (Brown, 2004). “the loss of even a single penny was intolerable” (Brown, 2004, p. 30). These were the children of the Lower East Side Jewish mothers, the immigrant Jewish women. These women were

intensely involved encouraging their children, while coaching them in strike techniques, as well as supporting them emotionally and financially wherever possible. At the same time, the newsboys group spawned its own natural leaders, who were not only effective but also much more successful with their strike efforts than many of their adult counterparts (Brown, 2004; Hoose, 2001).

Simultaneously, labor strikes arose in Russia. By 1888, there were “strike funds and strike treasuries in a variety of trades” associated with the formation of the Bund, a social labor federation, in 1897 (Rischin, 1977, p.44). The Tsar himself sowed the seeds of social revolution in the Jewish community. He opened the door for higher education to Jewish youth, in hopes of promoting Jewish assimilation, and creating the appearance of a liberalization of social and political constraints (Rischin, 1977). When the political tide turned by 1886, Jewish youth found themselves excluded from higher education opportunities (Pipes, 1990; Rischin, 1977). However, the empowered ethnic tide would not turn, and they persisted in educating themselves. “Many persisted in independent study, stirred by an ardor that was to flame into revolutionary fervor” (Rischin, 1977, p. 42). This culminated in the Russian Revolution of 1905, an indicator of things to come in 1917, and the “great labor upheaval,” accompanied by a valiant effort of “Jewish nationalism,” which was finally put down by the Tsarist government in 1907 (Rischin, 1977, pp. 44, 46).

The immigrant Jewish women in America had their own labor strikes in the garment industry (see Appendix B) (Rischin, 1977). The largest of these was in 1909, the Strike of the Twenty Thousand, made up of women's shirtwaist makers (Takaki, 1993). Rose Schneiderman's (1967) eyewitness account described:

[T]he strike was called. To everyone's amazement, twenty thousand women left the factories in protest against inhuman working conditions. The union was not prepared for so gigantic a walk-out and was overwhelmed by the calls made upon it" (pp. 90-1).

At the onset of this strike Schneiderman was an official in the Women's Trade Union League, which provided support and service to women's trade unions across the U.S. "The League entered this new fight with fervor and dedication" (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 91). The League provided officials and trainers who "taught strikers how to conduct meetings, and how to organize picket lines"... "collected money for relief, printed leaflets, provided speakers at strike meetings, arranged bail for those who were arrested, and secured legal services for their defense in court" (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 89).

Intercessions and influences within the Jewish community helped to resolve the Strike of the Twenty Thousand. Traditional expectations represented Jewish people as being responsible to and for each other. Both employers and workers were members of the Jewish community (Diner, 2004, pp. 110-1).

Although differences were inherent in the position of employers and workmen, talk was possible between them, for they were cut

from similar patterns. They spoke the same language, were reared in the moral law of Torah, responded to the same rhetoric and imagery, and employed the same gestures (Rischin, 1977, pp. 245-246).

The prototype of the *Bund* in Russia, a labor organization, set the pace for the *Bund's* historic purpose in America of social and industrial democracy (Rischin, 1977). “By the early years of the twentieth century, fundamental social change in the apparel trades had prepared the way for a lasting basis for orderly labor industrial relations” (Rischin, 1977, p. 245). The strike activities in the garment industry had broader influence in formulating a united Jewish ethnic identity for the American immigrant Jewish community (Takaki, 1993). The Jewish labor movement in America provided learning opportunities and encouragement, even though their existence was relatively brief. The labor unions strengthened self-esteem of members, provided improved social contacts, and inspired social action. “Few immigrants would forget the exhilaration of the first shop strike, vivid testimony to the grandeur of American freedom” (Rischin, 1977, p. 183).

The Jewish women in the Lower East Side held mixed opinions and views of the labor strike activities. Some had come out of labor activism and socialism in Russia. They undoubtedly watched vigilantly for opportunities to move their socialist agendas forward (Howe, 2004). Others did not have the time or energy to be concerned about any issues beyond their daily lives. “Want, hunger and despair filled many hearts, and organization (union) work stood still because people were afraid to

risk their jobs” (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 83). These two subgroups represented the extremes. The majority of women had awareness of the labor situation and certainly word spread effectively in this immigrant community, particularly when it came to working conditions and wages (Schneiderman, 1967). They understood that they were being compensated already well beyond what they could have earned in the old country (Rischin 1977). Still, compensation for the women was not equal to that of the men, even in America. This highlighted the inequality, unfairness, and discrimination against them. The women’s labor strikes attest to their sense of social justice for themselves and for each other (Schneiderman, 1967).

In addition to the Labor Movement strikes, another event of the time was the Economic Depression of the late 1800s. The Panic of 1893 caught everyone by surprise, as this was not something one would expect to encounter in the land of opportunity. The consequences of this financial reversal were catastrophic for the immigrants of the Lower East Side.

Economic Depression—the Panic of 1893

Steeple and Whitten (1998) described the economic depression as follows: “The panic of 1893 and its accompanying depression marks one of the decisive crises in American history”... “The recession that began in 1893 had deep roots” (pp. 1, 29). Feder (1936) targeted the collapse of a British banking establishment, Baring Brothers, with the precipitation of

the 1893 economic crisis, bringing a global perspective to the progression of events (Faulkner, 1959; Friedman, 1963; Hoffman, 1970; Steeples & Whitten, 1998). According to Foner (1955), the first indication of economic crisis in America in 1893, was the failure of the National Cordage Company, “which only five months before had declared a stock dividend of 100%” (p. 235). A sharp decline of the stock market succeeded this event, followed by subsequent “runs on the banks, thousands of business failures, and severe unemployment” (Foner, 1955, p. 235).

In a pattern of progression,

642 banks failed and 22,500 miles of railway went into receivership. More than 16,000 business firms went into bankruptcy. Thousands of shops and factories shut down; more thousands worked part time only, and Hundreds of thousands were thrown out of work. (Foner, 1955, p. 235)

As credit access was repeatedly constricted, financially sound firms could not recoup, as would typically be possible (Steeple & Whitten, 1998).

Hoarding of currency and gold became common, and commercial business failures escalated (Feder, 1936).

With at least three million out of a total labor force of five million unemployed, and with two to five times as many people dependent on these workers for their existence, it is clear that by the end of 1893 a large percentage of the population were unable to procure the necessities of life. (Foner, 1955, p. 235)

Steeple and Whitten (1998) added:

The business contraction of the 1890s washed over American life like a swirling tsunami over an exposed coastline. Everything that was exposed and vulnerable felt its effects. The pattern and pace of life changed. Problems such as unemployment, poverty,

vagrancy, and labor relations swept to unprecedented urgency. (p. 84)

Workers travelled many miles to find work, only to discover when they reached their destination, that there were no jobs (Foner, 1955). These individuals experienced social stigmatizing as tramps and hobos. Charities, towns and cities, and labor unions provided some measure of support, with food and small amounts of money (Feder, 1936; Foner, 1955). Labor officials exercised their influence, organized mass demonstrations, and worked with municipalities to provide some measure of public works employment and soup kitchens (Feder, 1936; Foner, 1955; Hoffman, 1970).

Moves on Washington for support and resolution of the unemployed population mostly were ignored (Feder, 1936; Foner, 1955; Hoffman, 1970). Union officials introduced the initiative to reduce a working day from ten hours to eight hours, in order to employ more workers (Foner, 1955). At the same time, employers were using the economic conditions to drive the union gains back to previous conditions (Foner, 1955). The combination and convergence of these conditions more deeply and thoroughly united all aspects of the American labor force (Foner, 1955).

According to Rischin (1977), “[T]he heavy depression...trapped the leading merchant manufacturers with a huge unsalable overstock...[and] encouraged unemployed (workers) to launch out on their own,” (p. 245). These workers had no overhead and undersold the

owners, thus restructuring the market. This ultimately brought about the creation of department stores, brokerages, and banks by the former sweatshop owners, when the economy recovered (Rischin, 1977). “Domestic markets glutted by excessive productive capacity impelled manufacturers to expand to new overseas markets to restart the wheels of enterprise” (Steeple & Whitten, 1998, p. 8). The economy, which came out of this experience, was quite different, with increased banking influences in investments, escalation of overseas trading of all kinds, and a shift from an agrarian economy to one of cities as hubs of manufacturing (Friedman, 1963; Steeples & Whitten, 1998). Remarkably, during this time of economic depression, workers did still invest in their inspirational publications, such as the *Forward* newspaper, a Yiddish language, socialist publication (Rischin, 1977).

Anti-Semitic accusations regarding the cause of the depression were not lacking: “Poor farmers in the South and Midwest who faced first the devastation unleashed in the aftermath of the Panic of 1873 and then the even worse Panic of 1893, short but devastating depressions, found comfort in blaming the Jews for their travails” (Diner, 2004, p. 170). Rumors circulated about the powerful Jewish bankers whose actions and policies ruined individuals living off the land, and Jewish businessmen in the Southern U.S. were physically attacked (Diner, 2004; Steeples & Whitten, 1998). The anti-Semitic rhetoric and agenda in the South rose to the point that a mob lynched an innocent Jewish man, Leo Frank (Diner,

2004). This was also when the Ku Klux Klan succeeded in formalizing their existence and purpose (Diner, 2004).

Rose Cohen (1995) commented on the economic desolation of this time. Cohen's (1995) family went for months without income, as her parents endured severe stress trying to care for their children. Cohen (1995) told how her sister ended up supporting everyone by doing housecleaning and childcare, and Cohen finally went into the same work. The Panic of 1893 directly and powerfully affected the lives of the Jewish women on the Lower East Side, in both their living and working conditions. They had known privation in the *shtetls* of Poland and Russia, and the many lessons and skills they had learned in previous similar circumstances served them in this situation (Birmingham, 1984).

The economic crisis taxed women's mental and emotional resilience, as they strategized how to make the resources stretch as far as possible, considering what they might have in surplus for trade, and what they might need to protect, hedge, defend and plan for, in the multitude of possibilities and eventualities (Cohen, 1995). Eviction and starvation were very real threats, based on their previous experiences in the old country and the vagaries of life in the Lower East Side (Spewack, 1995; Rischin, 1977). Women found ways around the established routes of doing business, inventing new ones, eliminating the intermediary or owner, and going directly to the customer (Rischin, 1977). These dire conditions in the "Golden Land" were still not as threatening and

formidable as in the old country (Takaki, 1993, p. 279). Even though there was anti-Semitic rhetoric, this was not widespread in terms of instigating violent actions against the Jews and was primarily limited to the Southern U.S. (Diner, 2004).

Schneiderman (1967) referred to the conditions during another time of economic crisis in 1907, when she said:

To add to the ever present inhuman working conditions, there was a crash in Wall Street and many firms went broke. But the poor people who had small savings in the banks were the worst sufferers. When the banks failed, they were completely wiped out, for there were no guaranteed savings in those days. (p. 82)

Undoubtedly, what Schneiderman (1967) described here occurred in some variation each time there was an economic crisis of some kind, so her description served as a generic description on these events and their impact on the Jewish immigrant community.

Economic threats were not the only concern for the Jewish community. Anti-Semitism was always lurking, even in unexpected places, including European countries renowned for democratic constitutions and liberal cultural attitudes, such as France (Cantor, 1994). France was the setting for a reprehensible event, involving an esteemed and decorated Jewish military officer, who was falsely accused and convicted of treason.

The Dreyfus Affair—1895

The Dreyfus Affair was:

a sensational trial in Paris of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer from a prominent Alsatian family, who was convicted of

selling military secrets to the Germans and sentenced to life imprisonment in the dreaded French penal colony of Devil's Island off the coast of Latin America. (Cantor, 1994, p. 291)

The French held a variety of opinions regarding his guilt or innocence, but eventually the courts determined the previous trial jury had convicted him based on false testimony. In a new trial, the court acquitted Dreyfus (Cantor, 1994; Diner, 2004). Cantor noted several army officers perjured themselves. One of the perjurers committed suicide and another exited the country (Cantor, 1994).

The impact of the Dreyfus Affair on the Jewish community was substantial, as Dreyfus was a fully assimilated Jew, living in a liberated, post revolution France. In their belief system, Dreyfus's assimilated identity should have eliminated the possibility of any anti-Semitic activity in his case (Cantor, 1994). "The Dreyfus case made many Jews who were well-accommodated to modernity and saw themselves as fully assimilated citizens feel uncomfortable" (Cantor, 1994, p. 219). In addition, citizens elected a local mayor, who based his campaign on an anti-Semitic political agenda. This demonstrated anti-Semitic public expression arose in more than one public arena during this era, not solely with the Dreyfus situation (Cantor, 1994). "An upsurge of political and racial anti-Semitism in Austria, Germany, and France throughout the 1880s and 1890s convinced many Jews that emancipation (from anti-Semitic attitudes) in Western Europe had failed" (Soren, 1992, p. 221). Jewish assimilation into the

Gentile culture did not address, prevent, or counteract anti-Semitism after all.

Theodor Herzl, while reporting the news on the case, saw major import in the significance of the Dreyfus Affair (Cantor, 1994; Johnson, 1987; Sorin, 1992). Herzl witnessed the vicious, rank anti-Semitism, exhibited by the crowd around Dreyfus, as officials removed his medals and other insignia from his person following his conviction. Witnessing the trial and outcome convinced Herzl as well, that anti-Semitism could not be eliminated (Johnson, 1987; Sachar, 1996; Sorin, 1992). Later, others chose to take the involvement of non-Jews in the Dreyfus acquittal as a sign that France was safe and justice under the law was possible for Jews (Cantor, 1994).

Herzl felt a special affinity for the concept of a national homeland for the Jewish people. Following the Dreyfus incident, he proceeded to put his vision into words, in the *Der Judenstaat*, the template for a Jewish state (Cantor, 1994; Johnson, 1987; Sachar, 1996; Sorin, 1992). Theodor Herzl ultimately gained recognition as the father of the modern Jewish state. Herzl was a prime expositor of Zionism (Cantor, 1994; Diner, 1992; Howe, 2004). As a result of his commitment to Zionism, Herzl managed to convene the first World Zionist Congress, thus politicizing and activating a powerful vision of a substantial Jewish community in its ancestral land of ancient Israel, at the time called Palestine (Cantor, 1994; Diner, 1992; Howe, 2004).

American Jews found their ethnic sensitivities and sympathies heightened in their awareness of the events associated with the Dreyfus case. People paid close attention to any news of the case, eagerly awaiting the outcome (Howe, 2004). A certain segment of Marxists disdained any report associated with the Dreyfus affair. They deemed the French military officer to be bourgeois, and therefore not worthy of their concern. Politics and commitment to their brand of social reform trumped ethnicity (Howe, 2004).

The Dreyfus case, along with resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe, was cause for attentive concern for the immigrant Jewish women in America. They typically had personal knowledge or connections with people experiencing these events and conditions firsthand. In addition, there was a close bond of ethnic connection for these women, the sense of the common concerns, and in some cases the common threats against their ethnic minority. Rose Schneiderman (1967) mentioned in her autobiography, “the Dreyfus case was uppermost in everybody’s mind and heart, and Mother and I anxiously read Emile Zola’s now famous, ‘J’Accuse’ ” (p. 40). Women’s personal knowledge and experiences of anti-Semitism affected their concern for the Jewish community in the rest of Europe and Russia, as well as indications globally, for the survival of the Jewish people.

World War I brought its own conditions directly affecting the survival of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. This event affected the

lives of the Jewish immigrant women in several ways. The World War I battlefields in Eastern Europe included the areas from which the Jewish immigrants had come, and where their communities and family members were still located. World War I was the war that was supposed to end all wars, but it was really just the beginning.

World War I—1914-1918

Tuchman (1962/1990) cogently and precisely attributed the initiation of World War I (WW I) in August 1914, as being the inevitable precursor to World War II (WW II). The initiation of global conflict, the strength and length of which was unprecedented in human history, permeated this era. This played out powerfully in the lives of citizens of many countries and certainly in the lives of the women citizens of those countries.

The military and political powers, specifically in Germany, prepared to fight to victory, even though they understood such victory must result in decimation of the country's resources. War was (and still is) violent, dangerous, and deadly for those involved in the act (Tuchman, 1990). WWI presented a time of deprivation, double duty, hard work, and separation or loss of human connections and loved ones, for those individuals not in the midst of invasion or near the Front (Tuchman, 1990).

[A]ll preferred to believe, along with the bankers and industrialists, that because of the dislocation of economic life a general European war could not last longer than three or four months. One constant among the elements of 1914—as of any

era—was the disposition of everyone on all sides not to prepare for the harder alternative, not to act upon what they suspected to be true. (Tuchman, 1990, p. 27)

In fact, WW I lasted over four years, from 1914-1918. The devastating march of the German army through central Europe, and the subsequent mass of refugees, was appalling to American citizens, who bore witness. German military officials saw fit to blame citizens for their resistance to the invading army, thus justifying their gratuitous slaughter of masses of civilians (Tuchman, 1990).

The devastation inflicted upon the citizens of Belgium had a decisive effect on the American perspective, to the point that President Wilson and others understood a German victory would change the role of America in the world from neutral humanitarian, to that of a defensive warrior nation (Tuchman, 1990). Tuchman (1990) records: “By the end of August people of the Allied nations were persuaded that they faced an enemy that had to be beaten, a regime that had to be destroyed, a war that must be fought to a finish” (p. 383).

The initial American neutrality was problematic for the British, as they soon found they needed trade with America for reinforcement of goods for war production and survival, while they attempted to interfere or prevent the U.S. from trading/reinforcing the supplies of Germany (Tuchman, 1990). This was not formally problematic, as the trade relations of the United States with the Allies (England and France) was secure, and it aligned with precedent as well as with cultural preferences.

President Wilson's commitment to neutrality was legendary. Wilson exhorted the American public regarding the importance of maintaining neutrality, in order to serve the greater good in the moralistic role of international peace arbiter (Tuchman, 1990).

In 1917, the neutrality of the United States turned. The decision of the Germans to unleash their submarines to attack neutral targets, and the proposal to reward Mexico with returned territories via the intercepted Zimmerman telegram, turned the tide to U.S. involvement in World War I (Tuchman, 1958/1994). The British had understood that the war was at stalemate without U.S. involvement, and Wilson's neutrality lectures, interspersed with offers of mediation, were missing the point by this time.

It was not mediation they wanted from America, but her great, fresh, untapped strength. Nothing else could break the war's deadlock. Arms, money, ships, men—everything the exhausted Allies needed was waiting in America, but Wilson would not budge. (Tuchman, 1994, p. 5)

The German plan was to unite Mexico and Japan along hostile historical lines to attack America, should America declare war on Germany (Tuchman, 1994). Since Japan, as an Allied member, already rewarded herself by taking over German possessions in the south Pacific, Mexico's reward would be the return of the previously Mexican territories of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas (Tuchman, 1994).

“By the beginning of World War I, one-third of all Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe had emigrated, most of them to the United States” (Takaki, 1993, p. 279). Those who remained in Europe were particularly

at risk as war broke out. As Sorin (1992) noted, “In the war zone, Jews suffered not only incidentally on account of their unfortunate location, they were also targets of deep-seated anti-Semitism, especially in Russia ... Indiscriminate rape and murder of Jews accompanied the movement of the Czarist armies, and some 300,000 Jews were expelled from their homes as potential spies and traitors” (Sorin, 1992, p. 207). The Eastern Front of World War I was precisely in the area of traditional Jewish settlement, known as The Pale of Settlement (Cantor, 1994; Rischin, 1977). There was devastating destruction of Jewish settlements and hundreds of thousands injured or killed (Cantor, 1994).

Jewish aid agencies in America rallied to support those caught up in the events in Europe, advising the community that their relatives were likely caught up in the machinations of battle as refugees or worse, as the agencies sought donations (Sorin, 1992).

World War I had virtually cut off the flow of European immigrants, reducing their numbers from 1,200,000 in 1914 to only 110,000 in 1918. Facing tremendous labor shortages, factory managers dispatched labor recruiters to the South. (Takaki, 1993, p. 342)

Another product of World War I influencing the global Jewish community was *the Balfour Declaration of 1917*, intended to invoke alliance, sympathy, and support of the Jewish people to the Allied cause (Johnson, 1987; Sachar, 1996; Sorin, 1992). Both Britain and Germany were intending to hold Palestine in the balance as a political pawn with the world Jewish community (Sorin, 1992). Britain trumped the process by

issuing the Balfour Declaration (Diner, 2004; Sachar, 1996). Britain, with some ambiguity, declared the favorable view of the British Empire upon the utilization of Palestine as “a national home for the Jewish people” (Sorin, 1992, p. 210). The declaration gave additional reinforcement to the fledgling Zionist movement in America and in the world at large, the movement to return the Jewish people to their ancient land and nation of Israel.

According to Schneer (2010), “well-established and active Jewish communities already existed in Palestine, including ‘aboriginal Palestinian Jews,’ farmers near Acre,” undoubtedly descendents of those who were left in Israel (Judea) after the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE (p. 10). Also present in Palestine at the time of World War I were those who had returned from the Jewish Diaspora centuries earlier from Spain, Persia and other Middle Eastern countries, the countries to which they been dispersed from their homeland before and after 70 CE (Goodman, 2007; Schneer, 2010).

Due to American neutrality, the immigrant Jewish women of the Lower East Side were only indirectly involved in the consequences of the conflict. However, the wartime conditions drew the women in from several perspectives. The women were vigilantly aware of the dangers and privations their family members in Europe and Russia were experiencing, many of whom were living essentially on the front line of the conflict (Rischin, 1977; Sorin, 1992). News from the old country flew

through this group, as those located in the path of danger preoccupied their thoughts and feelings (Rischin 1977; Sorin, 1992). Places and locations in the wartime news sources were familiar to them and may have been the specific location of their previous homes. Heartrending emotions were the order of the day in the immigrant Jewish community, as well as pre-occupation with their dear ones, so far away (Sorin, 1992).

Some Jewish immigrants avoided legal registration of their presence in America, in order to protect their sons from military draft (Howe, 2004). This was a personal choice and not reflective of the immigrant group as a whole, but more likely reflected their knowledge and experience with Russian army conscription of young Jewish males (Cantor, 1994). Schneiderman's (1967) focus in her autobiography was still on union activity even during the war. When she traveled to Europe after the war, she recorded, "Everywhere we looked there was still evidence of the war in the poorly clad people and the depleted shops. We also felt the cold very much, for there was little heat, even in the hotel" (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 132). Life in America was different during and after the war. The war did not have a strong effect on the American way of life, compared to Europe, as there were no foreign troops on American soil, and the conflict was an ocean away from East Coast American shores.

In addition to the impact of World War I on this immigrant group, the Russian Revolution also took place during the Progressive Era. This

was a political socialist revolution, which by all accounts had substantial Jewish involvement, with the political group known as the Bolsheviks.

The Russian Revolution ultimately served the Jewish people poorly and only increased their suffering and destruction in that country.

The Russian Revolution of 1917

During this time in Russian history, the government proscribed and dictated the plight of the Jews.

The empire's five million Jews, at the bottom of its ethnic hierarchy, were subject to a comprehensive range of legal disabilities and discriminations which by the end of the 19th century embraced some 1,400 different statutes and regulations as well as thousands of lesser rules, provisions and judicial interpretations. They—alone of all the ethnic groups—were forbidden to own land, to enter the Civil Service, or to serve as officers in the army; there were strict quotas on Jewish admissions into higher schools and universities; and apart from a few exceptions, the Jews were forced by law to live within fifteen provinces of the western Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania and Poland which made up the Pale of Settlement. This was the tsarist version of the Hindu caste system, with the Jews in the role of the Untouchables,” and “Hardly surprising, then, that such a large and prominent part in the revolutionary movement should have been played by Jews. (Figes, 1996, pp. 80, 82)

The revolutionary movement was a leftist movement, a socialist movement, involving a significant number of Jewish activists known as the Bolsheviks. Referring to this period in Russian history, Pipes (1990) observed:

To the historian of this period, the most striking—and the most ominous—impression is the prevalence and intensity of hatred: ideological, ethnic, social. All these passions were held in check only by the forces of order—the army, the gendarmerie, the police—It was common in those days to speak of Russia living on a volcano. (p. 194)

The volcano became the Bolshevik or Russian Revolution of 1917. The Bolshevik intellectuals who conspired for revolution in Russia in the time leading up to 1917 were confident they could divest themselves of their Jewishness, which had brought so much pain and suffering. Under Marxist socialism, they could vanquish the distorted image of Jew as “other” and accomplish a cultural and ethnic blending into the scene, as one of many ethnic groups, the relevance of which was obsolete (Figes, 1996; Johnson, 1987).

Assimilated Jews were part of the Bolshevik Revolution, which evolved into the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Bolsheviks were not concerned about the task of governing following the revolution, due to their messianic assumption that their revolution would become global and eliminate all current national governments (Pipes, 1990). The public perceived that large numbers of Jews were participating in the revolutionary movement; however, the Jewish majority was actually not involved (Figes, 1996). Leon Trotsky (an ethnic Jew) associated himself with the Bolshevik origins of the revolution (Fitzpatrick, 1982; Johnson, 1987). Trotsky was openly hostile to anything associated with Jews or Jewishness, and consistently refused to meet with Jewish groups when he was in power (Johnson, 1987). The plans and intentions of the Bolshevik Revolution backfired later, in the 1930s, when Stalin’s notorious murderous solutions to political problems culminated in the Great Purge of 1937-1938. Stalin’s purge “swept away many of the surviving Old

Bolshevik revolutionaries and effected a wholesale turnover of personnel within the regime's newly acknowledged and privileged elite”

(Fitzpatrick, 1982, p. 2).

If the Bolsheviks had known what Stalin's ultimate intentions were for them, would they have fomented and implemented the revolution?

Revolutionaries serve their purpose, and like generals, when the revolution or the war is over, they can be dispensable, as times and political

expediencies move on. “The Bolshevik's mood remained belligerent and revolutionary,” which eventually brought them into opposition to the new

governmental authority (Fitzpatrick, 1982, p. 2). Leon Trotsky was the

prominent Bolshevik leader. Trotsky was “a Jewish intellectual who had shown ruthlessness and a flamboyant, charismatic style of leadership” and

other revolutionaries perceived him as more radical than Stalin

(Fitzpatrick, 1982, p. 101).

Trotsky's revolutionary peers characterized him as an outsider due to being a Jew. The Bolsheviks' Revolution produced anarchic civil

conflict instead of democratic liberalism (Fitzpatrick, 1982). This was an

ironic outcome considering that: “a constant theme in the struggles of

lower class Russians was the determination to achieve direct power over

their lives” (Steinberg, 2001, p. 176).

The Bolshevik revolution is associated with Trotsky's Marxist,

socialist, communist revolution of the proletariat, or workers, against the

bourgeoisie rulers. The Bolshevik revolutionary emphasis switched from

the proletariat to the communist party, and Stalin later betrayed the Bolsheviks (Fitzpatrick, 1982). The switch to emphasis on the party meant that the proletariat could suddenly access formerly unattainable bourgeois positions in government structures, thus creating a new order (Fitzpatrick, 1982; Pipes, 1990). This reinforced the perception that “policies of proletarian internationalism in practice had a disconcerting similarity to the policies of old-style Russian imperialism” (Fitzpatrick, 1982, p. 63). The Bolsheviks’ intention of increased power to workers and a societal inversion actually resulted in “terror, progress, and upward mobility” with the previous bureaucratic government structure mostly intact (Fitzpatrick, 1982, p. 8).

In spite of the perception of a conspiring global Jewish cabal bringing the revolution, the average Russian Jew had no benefit from the political and social position of the revolutionary leaders who were assimilated Jews. In fact quite the opposite, as the persecutions only escalated, and as Jews appeared to be naturally bourgeois, rather than proletariat (Fitzpatrick, 1982; Johnson, 1987; Pipes, 1990; Sorin, 1992). In 1919, Russian authorities closed all Jewish organizations, committees, schools, and synagogues, with the state taking ownership of the properties (Johnson, 1987). This suited the Bolsheviks well, as it eliminated a difference between Jews and other people (Johnson, 1987). This was a very obtuse way of eliminating persecution targeting the Jews as “other” via pogroms. Still in practical terms, this only instigated more

persecutions at a deeper level, as the pogroms did not succeed in eliminating the aspects of Jewish religion and culture (Johnson, 1987).

Ironically, as disillusionment set in with the perception of broken revolutionary promises, such as “peace, bread, land, freedom” people blamed the Bolshevik Jews, and some characterized them as “the most dangerous traitors to the Russian (post revolutionary) nation” (Steinberg, 2001, p. 19). The Jewish people were the subject of unmitigated hatred by non-Jewish Russian citizens of every social class and type (Figes, 1996).

Alternately, the Russian Revolution’s success instilled hope in the Jewish people in America for positive social and governmental change (Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977). Initially, American Jews lacked accurate information regarding the conditions on the ground in Russia, and were still committed to the philosophy of socialism (Schneiderman, 1967). The American Jewish community could not imagine this change could be anything but good for the Jews (Howe, 2004). The Ku Klux Klan promoted the perception that the Jews, as Bolsheviks, were responsible for the Russian Revolution, and therefore conspired to create a similar revolution in America (Diner, 2004). Others took up the cry, purporting that the Bolsheviks, the Jews, were preparing for a communist revolution in America, producing the “Red Scare” (Birmingham, 1984, p. 115). “All at once in 1919, the proliferation of strikes against American industry provided all the evidence that was needed that a Communist takeover was indeed at hand” (Birmingham, 1984, p. 115). The Communist Party

further perpetrated this perception by the declaration out of the Soviet Comintern, that the entire world was subject to Communist revolution, and that this was an active intent worth working for (Birmingham, 1984).

The declaration that all the world was subject to Communist conversion was a clear and present danger to the western democracies. Even with the attachment of the Jewish immigrant community to their Russian origins, the majority were quite clear about their fealty to American ideals of freedom and democracy, translated into their context of socialist values (Rischin, 1977). To them America had to be the “Golden Land” (Takaki, 1993, p. 279).

Wars and political crises were not the only existential threats to this immigrant group. The Flu Pandemic of 1918 created a different kind of existential crisis, to which no group was immune. The pandemic moved quickly through populated areas throughout the U.S., as well as globally, as the troop movements associated with World War I provided the human vehicles of transmission. Individuals living in concentrated population areas were particularly vulnerable.

The Flu Pandemic of 1918—“the Great Influenza”

The Flu Pandemic of 1918 stunned the scientific world, with its extreme virulence and the rapidity with which it moved through populations, with significant numbers of fatalities. The onset of this flu strain, and the sheer numbers of severely, even violently ill patients, overwhelmed medical staff, facilities, equipment, and supplies, across

America and around the world (Barry, 2004/2005). “Epidemiologists today estimate that (the 1918) influenza likely caused at least 50 million deaths worldwide and possible as many as 100 million” (Barry, 2005, p. 4). The presence of a world war enabled the influenza virus to travel quickly and broadly. Concentrations of people, such as immigrant populations living in close quarters, or the wartime laborers, who shared beds, utensils and all living accommodations by shift, or soldiers in military camps, were particularly vulnerable (Barry, 2005).

As governments transported tens of thousands of military troops, bivouacking them together, the virus spread rapidly, logarithmically, through them. Barry (2005), drawing from an army report of the time, emphasized the exponential movement of the illness: “In a single day, 1543...soldiers reported ill with influenza” (p.187). In another location, “In six days the hospital went from 610 occupied beds to 4,102 occupied, almost five times more patients than it had ever cared for” (Barry, 2005, p. 214).

In Philadelphia, a city with a large number of Jewish immigrants living in tenements, “in ten days—*ten days*—the epidemic had exploded from a few hundred civilian cases and one or two deaths a day to hundreds of thousands ill and hundreds of deaths each day” (Barry, 2005, p. 221). What was particularly frustrating to medical personnel was the fact that medical interventions were completely ineffective, resulting in onset of illness to fatality in a matter of hours. The influenza “wiped out entire

families from the time the day began in the morning to bedtime that night—entire families were gone completely” (Barry, 2005, p. 347). By estimate, possibly 21,000 children in New York City became orphans due to the pandemic (Barry, 2005).

In many locations the hospital staffs were overwhelmed, with doctors and nurses ill and dying, so that community authorities directed citizens against bringing patients to the hospitals (Barry, 2005). Routine infection precautions, such as isolation of groups of ill patients, appeared ineffective, and there was a nursing shortage, which inhibited management of the communicable illness. Due to the transport of physicians and many nurses to the war frontlines, medical personnel coverage was thoroughly inadequate for anything out of the ordinary. Finally, “The virus itself, more than any treatment provided, determined who lived and who died,” and the pandemic could have permanently altered the civilized world in a short time (Barry, 2005, p. 372).

In reading the historical accounts, a natural conclusion is that the pestilence affected the lives of the immigrant Jewish women, as it moved rapidly and dramatically through close, confined living conditions and spaces such as the tenements of the Lower East Side. Interestingly, there are no specific accounts of this in the ethnic literature sources (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977). Other sources do verify the presence of the influenza in the tenements, with large numbers of surviving orphans, and the loss of entire families, as noted above (Barry,

2005). Cohen (1995), Schneiderman (1967), and Spewack (1995) do not refer to this pandemic in their autobiographies.

The only influenza reference is in Schneiderman's (1967) account of her father's death, which occurred in 1892, years before this pandemic. "That winter there was a lot of 'flu around. Of course it was not called 'flu' then, but by any name it was deadly" (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 27). Schneiderman's (1967) father was dead within 48 hours of onset of symptoms.

Either the toll of influenza on the Jewish immigrant population was not as high as for some others, or the privations and persecutions of Eastern Europe and Russia, put American influenza into perspective. Dietary laws and associated cleanliness requirements of the religious practices might have promoted general good health in this group (Rischin, 1977). However, accounts of the virus indicate that healthy people succumbed in a matter of hours in some cases (Barry, 2005).

Next, I explored the issue of Women's Suffrage, the right to vote for American women, and the impact for the immigrant Jewish women of the Lower East Side. These women's daily lives did not necessarily provide an opportunity for voting rights to be a high priority. They were also a recognized and marginalized minority, even in the predominantly immigrant land of America.

Women's Suffrage—the Right to Vote – 1920

Women's suffrage, women's rights, and abolition of slavery were all associated in American women's social activism of the Progressive Era (Bausum, 2004; Buhle & Buhle, 1978; Kraditor, 1965/1981). Clearly, the causes were associated and related, and as social activists created conventions and conferences for one, the other causes inevitably were on the agenda. Names associated with woman suffrage are Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Alice Paul, and Susan B. Anthony, all of whom campaigned tirelessly and relentlessly in both these moral causes, and ultimately formed the National American Women Suffrage Association [NAWSA] (Kraditor, 1981).

Woman suffrage advocacy was associated with concepts of democracy and freedom (Kraditor, 1981). Suffrage advocacy was also associated with encouraging women through personal development to stretch their expectations of themselves and move forward with change and progress, by organizing and militating for their demands (Buhle & Buhle, 1978, p. 1). The suffragists had programs for immigrants, but these were still associated with the dominant ethnic majority (Kraditor, 1981). “their Americanization programs...were actually programs to transform the immigrants so far as possible into Anglo-Saxons and ‘therefore’ into desirable voters” (Kraditor, 1981, p. 254).

Here again the suffrage movement proves itself a ‘bourgeois movement,’ that is, reformist rather than revolutionary, for although the theory of progress that they developed seems to imply unending change, the

suffragists did not visualize any further extensions of the franchise after women had secured the vote. Nor did they approve of the efforts of other minorities to effect changes in those areas of American life in which the suffragists themselves equated the customary with the natural. (Kraditor, 1981, pp. 258-259)

The women who primarily participated in the suffrage movement were women who had financial means of some sort, and therefore were not invested in specifically improving immigrant living and working conditions (Kraditor, 1981). Incontestably, working women needed the vote more than affluent women did. In suffragist tradition, the ballot represented power, self-protection, and opportunities for social justice (Kraditor, 1981). Working women came to realize they needed the vote, just as they needed social reform represented by their unions (Kraditor, 1981). Working class women as suffragists were small in number.

Relatively few thought of woman's suffrage as crucially important. The ballot box, despite union engagement, was primarily a middle class issue. And these immigrant women were not yet middle class, in many cases not yet citizens. More important than the vote were jobs, pay envelopes, decent working conditions, a future. (Spewack, 1995, p. xxv)

Schneiderman (1967) recalled her involvement with the women suffragists, who sought her help to appeal to the working women union members. She attended union meetings specifically for appealing to the membership to vote for the suffrage amendment. "I distributed tons of literature. I got up a series of open letters (which) told of working women's need of the vote and how important it was for them to be enfranchised in order to help themselves towards better working

conditions through legislation” (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 124).

Schneiderman (1976) was pleased to be a citizen of the U.S. when the suffragist vote came up, so that she could participate in the passing of the initiative. Belle Moskowitz came late to the suffragist endeavor, but once she had the opportunity to listen to the suffragist point of view, she quickly realized her sense of social justice placed her in the cause (Perry, 1992). Moskowitz supported Theodore Roosevelt as a political candidate because he was pro-suffrage (Perry, 1992).

There were also women who united in their opposition to women’s right to vote, named “antis,” who feared the outcome of social change, and believed the votes of the male relatives accounted for the female voters (Bausum, 2004, p. 24). These women “wanted to avoid the unseemly business of politics: they preferred to use their influence behind the scenes” (Bausum, 2004, p. 24). Women protestors, who demonstrated for suffrage, found themselves the subjects of verbal and physical assault, fines and arrest, denial of common hygienic supplies, as well as forced feeding in jail, if they chose hunger strike methods (Bausum, 2004). The question then became: “How *could* the nation claim to fight for democracy abroad (in World War I) when it failed to treat citizens democratically at home?” (Bausum, 2004, p. 47).

Factors contributing to the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 giving women the vote were identified by Bausum (2004) as more working women; women voting responsibly in states which allowed

women to vote; women's active support and involvement in politics; women serving in the military, and the current awareness of democratic values instilled most recently by World War I. In addition, voting rights for women were associated with a generic assertiveness (Buhle & Buhle, 1978). The converging phenomena of historical opportunity and national leadership resulted in "a feat of will and expertise" in the successful passage of voting rights for women (Buhle & Buhle, 1978, p. 413).

Once women gained the right to vote, NAWSA became the League of Women Voters, and several of the prominent leaders devoted the rest of their lives to the world peace movement, or retired from public life (Bausum, 2004). One leader in particular, Alice Paul, continued to advocate publicly for women's rights, as she understood women "were not treated equally in marriage, at work, or by laws" (Bausum, 2004, p. 85). Paul ultimately wrote the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which passed both the House and the Senate, but was never ratified (Bausum, 2004).

Schneiderman (1967) was very clear regarding her opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, a surprising turn considering her strong sense of social justice:

Their objective was to ask Congress to give women equal rights with men. I refused to participate in the movement because there was a possibility that such a resolution might hurt rather than help. It could nullify the minimum wage, the maximum hours, the compensation or pregnancy—all the laws affecting women workers for which we had struggled for so many years. I knew that if the resolution was passed, it would give employees a reason for dispensing with our laws because they didn't affect men and therefore, working women, to be equal with men, must not ask for

any kind of protection against exploitation. (Schneiderman, 1967, p.126)

Historians have sorely neglected or ignored the historical account of American women obtaining the legal right to vote (Bausum, 2004). Today women historians have researched and documented the background, detail, and complexity of this historical event (Bausum, 2004; Buhle & Buhle, 1978). The passage of the 19th Amendment, although fraught with challenges and controversy, was a victory for women, a victory for democracy, and most of all a victory for freedom in the Golden Land, the *Goldene Medina*.

The Jewish immigrant women of the Lower East Side were included in the group referred to above as being educated into the issues of the day, from the perspective of the Anglo-Saxon ethnic majority. The intention was to make them suitable voters in America. Jewish immigrant women from Russia had been involved in the Socialist political movement, and Russian officials incarcerated them for their revolutionary political activities (Rischin, 1977). These women were essentially unaffected by the Anglo-Saxon worldview, and typically became politically active as soon as possible in their new land (Orleck, 1995). Most of the women of the Lower East Side did not have the time or inclination to have immediate concerns about voting rights, in their existential world of 16 -18 hour workdays. “While many favored women suffrage, most Jewish immigrant daughters...did not join pro-suffrage organizations or actively campaign for the vote” (Glenn, 1990, p. 207).

These women were sensitive to the discrepancies of compensation and general regard and respect, or lack thereof, which they experienced, as compared to men (Orleck, 1995). Once they were able to embrace a concept of citizenship with which they could identify and formalize, there is no doubt they understood and were interested in voting rights, as full American citizens. “Most ... desired a greater voice and expanded rights, including suffrage, without pushing for total equality between the sexes” (Glenn, 1990, p. 207).

Summary

The pogroms, labor strikes, the Panic of 1893, the Dreyfus Affair, World War I, the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Flu Pandemic of 1918, and Women’s Suffrage, all had some impact on the American Jewish community. The research establishes the impact of all of these events, and these events affected the Jewish immigrant women either directly or indirectly (Cantor, 1994; Kraditor, 1981; Rischin, 1977; Schneiderman, 1967; Takaki, 1993). The events were sweeping in their impact on populations in Europe, Russia, and America (Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993). The women’s origins, history, concurrent survival challenges, and living and working conditions were all somehow involved (Diner, 2000; Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993).

Existential challenges for the women, either directly or indirectly, affected them personally or their family members, friends, and members of their ethnic group. At the same time, their daily routine, of living and

working in America, had to go on with as little disruption as possible. Their very existence and the existence of their families, economically and personally, depended on their labor and their ability to hold their families together and meet their needs (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). The women of the Jewish community were solution-oriented, community directed, and purpose driven (Nadell, 2003). If something did not work, they worked on it until it did, whether it was an idea, a method, a marital match, a recipe or a clothing pattern. This is the quality of resilience, which was evident in their ability to survive the circumstances of their homeland, sell everything, and leave it all behind, to embark on a new opportunity in a new homeland, the Golden Land of America (Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993). What mattered most to them about these events was how to survive, to be well, and to prosper out of them.

Using their resilience, power, and leadership, the Jewish women came through these events and moved forward with their lives. These women made powerful choices for themselves and for their families in terms of survival, hard work, and ultimately prosperity (Howe, 2004; Nadell, 2003). They coached, led, pushed, and inspired (Howe, 2004). The women did whatever it took, in order to accomplish their purposes, goals and intentions (Nadell, 2003). The women provided feminist leadership to their families, and to the community at large, both by example and by commitment to the common good, as they fostered and mentored others and provided sound advice and encouragement (Nadell,

2003). The Jewish immigrant women exhibited resiliency, power, and leadership in their choices, and in their responses to all of these events, to all of these challenges.

CHAPTER FOUR JEWISH WOMEN'S RESILIENCY

Evidenced by the descriptions in this chapter, ethnicity, immigrant class/culture, and skills all contributed to resiliency for the Jewish immigrants. The gendered experiences of the women in the group and their ability to adapt were an important part of the story of resilience for this group. The cohesiveness and interdependence of the immigrant group, and particularly of the women in the group, contributed to their progress in the *Goldene Medina*. Their persistence, effectiveness, adaptability, courage, determination, and relentlessness were evident in the research sources of this dissertation, and the circumstances, which they encountered, called forth their character assets.

Howe (2004) offered some insight on the process of garnering resiliency, in two characteristic ways of reacting to circumstances.

Over the centuries, the Jews had learned to keep in mind two measures of response: the first, an austere balance sheet of the outrage to which they had been subjected and which, even without a final reckoning on earth, they did not propose to forget; and the second, a readiness to rejoice in the smallest gains that might nevertheless come to them ... (such as) there had been improvements (since their arrival in America and the tenements): a workable fire escape, a lighted hallway, a toilet for each family. (pp. 153-154)

In recognizing and naming the challenges, and noting and celebrating the improvements, they kept their equilibrium and propelled their lives forward.

Elements of Ethnicity

East European Jews were the predominant Jewish population in the United States at the turn of the century, characterized as the Third Wave of Jewish immigration and the largest, arriving in America in the late 1880s (Howe, 2004; Stein, 2002). By 1880, there were 80,000 Jewish immigrants and over a million in the early 1900s in New York City alone (Dubofsky, 1968; Howe, 2004). The vast majority were concentrated in an area of New York City known as the Lower East Side (Diner, 2000; Rischin, 2000; Sorin, 1992; Telushkin, 2002). The Lower East Side was also known as: “the Jewish Quarter” “the Russian Quarter” “the Jewish East Side” “the Hebrew Quarter” “The Ghetto” “Downtown” and “East Side” (Diner, 2000, p.38).

The concentration of the population in the area reached remarkably intense levels, estimated to be possibly as much as 1000 per acre (Rischin, 1977; Sorin, 1992; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993; Telushkin, 2002). This particular location came to be recognized as the most populous and vibrant Jewish community in the world in this historical period (Rischin, 2000; Sorin, 1992). The immigrant community established its own newspapers, coffee shops, social, religious, and health care institutions and forms of entertainment, such as the *Yiddish Theatre* (Dubofsky, 1968; Ernst, 1949; Howe, 2004; Telushkin, 2002).

The Jewish immigrant population vacated ghettos in Eastern Europe, only to arrive in a ghetto in America, completing some sort of

ethnic and cultural circle between worlds (Sorin, 1992). Under ghetto circumstances, Jews, over generations, had learned to live with intense overcrowding, “in layers and in shifts” (Birmingham, 1984). After experiencing generations of overcrowding in Eastern Europe, the crowding, the tenements, and the poor plumbing, characteristic of the Lower East Side, did not seem a hardship or unusual to them (Diner, 2004). Ethnic enclaves developed in work situations, and Jewish ethnicity was particularly associated with the garment industry (Dubofsky, 1968; Tentler, 1979).

East European Jewish ethnicity was a factor in the lives of the Jewish immigrant women living in the Lower East Side of New York City (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977). Through the ethnic group’s rapid implementation, they were successful in continuing the East European ethnic life style and culture in America (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Telushkin, 2002). The entire culture for these women was intensely ethnic, with the burgeoning population concentration, and the identification of the group as a minority in America, but a majority in the Lower East Side (Rischin, 1977).

In addition, their identity as individuals, and as ethnic group members, drew attention to the distinctions of their ethnicity, as they associated with others from different ethnic backgrounds (Auch, 2002). Jewish ethnicity came to be associated with the garment industry and sweatshop-working conditions, in some cases stereotypically negative,

according to Levine (1976). Levine (1976) indicated others (non-Jews) specifically blamed the Jewish ethnic group for inventing the sweatshop work environment (see Appendix D). There was a contradictory source on this issue. Zaretz (1934) strongly objected to this perception, and indicated the sweatshop system preceded the Jewish immigration by 50 years. Nevertheless, the sources clearly and firmly established the associations of this ethnic group with the garment industry itself, as well as all the issues of the industry.

One could soundly tie the characteristic of resiliency for this immigrant group to the ethnically Jewish quality of endurance, in the survival and the continuance of an ethnically identifiable group (Birmingham, 1984). The very survival of a recognizable tribe of people for thousands of years was certainly associated with resiliency and endurance (Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993). Enduring ethnic tribal affiliations have always been a recognizable strength of the Jewish people, and these have enabled perpetual resiliency (Howe, 2004).

Another influential factor besides ethnicity in the lives and experiences of the Jewish immigrant group was the social construction of immigrant class/culture (Takaki, 1993). A substantial part of the tribal connection was a common current and generational Jewish culture. The Jewish culture was hardy (Takaki, 1993). It was a resilient culture, as a culture that could adhere to tradition, while renewing itself for current conditions (Howe, 2004; Nadell, 2003; Takaki, 1993). The quality of

resiliency supported the Jewish culture in maintaining its relevance through generations and thousands of years (Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993).

As new immigrants in America, the Jews were also once more a minority. The Jews automatically became members of the American immigrant class as well as an ethnic, cultural, and religious minority in America. The immigrant class and cultural issues substantially affected this immigrant group's adjustment to life and freedom, as they began to live the American Dream.

Immigrant Class/Culture Issues

Jewish immigrants arrived in America, with a heavy history of challenging social changes in the old country, including such changes as would characterize them as political refugees, as well as economic and ethnic ones (Diner, 2000; Sorin, 1992). Therefore, immigrant class and cultural issues were not new to them. They had relied on their quality and strength of resiliency as they adjusted and even reinvented themselves many times for the sake of survival, always adhering to the traditions, while managing current realities (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993). These changes in the country of their origin included the Russian May Laws of the 1880s, directed specifically and exclusively toward the Jews. These laws resulted in dramatic loss of personal and community freedoms and the infamous pogroms, perpetrated against the Jewish populations of Eastern Europe and Russia (Rischin, 1977; Telushkin, 2002). The May Laws prohibited Jews from owning or renting

land outside of cities, from entering universities, and from many trades, including the production or sale of liquor, and what we know today as the hospitality industry (Rischin, 1977). This resulted in extreme poverty for the Jewish population (Diner, 2004; Rischin, 1977). The economic situation became dire, and then the pogrom activity escalated.

The pogroms were violent, brutal, deadly attacks on Jewish settlements. They occurred for a variety of reasons, including the Russian Tsar's fanatical intention of creating a completely Christian country by removing Jews and their religion (Birmingham, 1984). As a result, many immigrated to America. "The routes the Eastern European Jews took to come to America were circuitous, difficult, and tricky. No two tales were exactly alike; though there was a common theme—escape. And all required a common element—bravery" (Birmingham, 1984, p. 33).

Rose Schneiderman's (1967) journey to America started when her father suddenly disappeared and then turned up outside Russia, via correspondence coming from him in Warsaw, on his way to America (see Appendix A). The Cohen (1995) autobiography talks about Rose Cohen's father disappearing as well, the method for illegal escape from the country. Disappearing allowed for the wife and family members or neighbors, when the authorities questioned their family member's disappearance, that they truly knew nothing. Typically, this was the method of departure in particular for the father or other male family members (Birmingham, 1984). This was because men could generate the

resources to bring the rest of the family (Rischin, 1977; Telushkin, 2002). As a result, Jews in any country in Europe often held in a sort of non-citizen or other status. They had no papers, nothing like a passport or visa for traveling, and there were no birth certificates or other forms of identification (Cohen, 1995). They therefore bribed their way across borders until they reached a port city, where they were able to pay for and obtain ocean passage to America (Birmingham, 1984; Cohen, 1995).

Language

The Jews were one of many immigrant groups bringing their own distinct culture to America, but the concentration and subsequent influence of the Jewish population in the Lower East Side of New York City was profound (Howe, 2004; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993). On the issue of language, the preferred language of this group was not the state language of their origin. Jews preferred the language of their ethnicity, *Yiddish*, a combination of the German and Hebrew languages, specific to the Eastern European population (Howe, 2004; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993). Therefore, regardless of which country and of which national origin, immigrants could communicate with each other in their cultural language, which crossed the national boundaries of the old world (Howe, 2004; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993). This was undoubtedly an advantage for working together in the new world and helped bind the culture together. English, however, was the language of assimilation into the American culture, and

it facilitated the ethnic acceptance of the Jewish immigrant group (Takaki, 1993).

Cohen (1995) spoke poignantly and with great distress more than once regarding her own inadequacies with the English language, primarily around reading and writing skills.

I was always ashamed of showing my ignorance. But we were all ashamed of showing our ignorance. A girl who could not read or write (in English) would do anything to hide it. We were as much ashamed of it as we were of our poverty. Indeed to show one was to show the other. They seemed inseparable. (p. 251)

This was the minority voice of the women who did not have the educational opportunities to learn English and other subjects, unlike the majority of women in the Jewish immigrant group.

Poverty and Housing

On the issue of being economic refugees, the majority of East European immigrants had approximately \$9.00 in their possession on arrival in America and the poverty was grinding and profound (Telushkin, 2002). The arrival of newer immigrants affected wages considerably, because the newer immigrants would always take lower pay (Henry, 1923; Howe, 2004; Seidman, 1942). In the late 1800s, a semi-skilled male worker in the garment trade could only be making \$7.00 per week, and women less (Howe, 2004). Therefore, their ability was remarkable to improve their lot.

On the issue of housing for the new immigrants, the tenements of the Lower East Side provided the living conditions for the Jews (Diner,

2000; Howe, 2004; Stein, 2002; Telushkin, 2002). The original tenements had previously been single-family homes, which the owners had converted into small living spaces, in order to accommodate large numbers of people (Ernst, 1949; Meltzer, 1967; Rischin, 1977; Spewack, 1995). Builders later constructed tenement buildings in a specific style, known as the dumbbell style. This building style had an open ventilation core positioned in essentially what was the center of two connected apartment buildings (Ernst, 1949; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Sachar, 1992; Trachtenberg, 1982/2007; Von Drehle, 2003). There was little in the way of city building codes or regulations and renters were at the mercy of their circumstances (Ernst, 1949; Howe, 2004).

The tenements of the Lower East Side were legend for the grim living conditions they provided (Diner, 2000; Howe, 2004; Telushkin, 2002). These structures were large buildings, housing three room apartments for the most part, which could have any number of occupants, consisting of immediate family, extended family, and boarders, all in the same finite, minute living space (Burt, 2004; Meltzer, 1967; Smuts, 1959; Spewack, 1995; Stein, 2002). Apartments usually had a single window in the main room, opening to the outside (Howe, 2004). Other rooms, if windowed, had windows opening into a hallway or an airshaft (Stein, 2002). Ventilation was non-existent, and odors were profound, rank, and perpetual (Howe, 2004; Spewack, 1995). A single tap with a sink on each floor provided water (Howe, 2004). Bathroom facilities were inside, with

one on each floor, or outside in the tiny backyard (Ernst, 1949; Meltzer, 1967; Stein, 2002). The apartments had no heat sources other than a kitchen stove and refrigeration was available only in winter by keeping foods outside on the fire escape (Stein, 2002). In summer, to escape the oppressive heat of the tenements at night, people slept on the roofs, fire escapes, in the park, or on the stoops (Von Drehle, 2003).

Cohen (1995) recalled one of her first lessons of life in America provided by her landlady. The landlady quickly let her know that even though they had the opportunity to earn more than ever before, that they would have to purchase everything they would need to live (Cohen, 1995). In Russia, Cohen's family had their own home and a garden where they grew most of their food. In America, they would have to buy everything to live from others; everything for living would cost them money. Rose's father also commented:

This is not like home. There the house was our own. And for the lot and garden we paid one dollar a year. There, too, we were among friends and relatives. While here, if we haven't rent for one month, we are thrown out on the street. (Cohen, 1995, p. 106-7)

In these living conditions, making the rent each month was a perpetual concern for the Jewish immigrant population. Bella Spewack (1995) commented from her experience:

How we ever achieved the rent when the day of payment came around, I don't know. Invariably my mother would have to beg a few days' stay. The landlord, still a young man, had already acquired the calculating glazed look which all of us on the Lower East Side understood as 'Pay or get out.' He never looked directly at us. (p. 101)

This was the shame and suffering of poverty, which plagued most members of this immigrant group from their arrival. Schneiderman (1967) commented from her experience:

It was easier for the poor to move than to pay rent. When you moved into a new place, you always paid a month's rent and you got a concession of a month or six weeks. After that it was all used up, if you had the money to pay the next month's rent, you stayed on. If not, you moved again. (pp. 29-30)

Sadly, this was characteristic of Lower East Side living conditions and social concerns, and evidence of the chronic impact of poverty on this immigrant group. Nevertheless, their resiliency prevailed, through the affinity and strength of their ethnic and cultural affiliations and community (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993). As Strong (1940) pointed out, “[T]here was strength even in poverty and misery, for at the bottom, the one direction is up” (p. 2).

Illness and Disease

Another of the existential challenges to any immigrant population was illness and disease (Ernst, 1949). This was particularly true with the unsanitary living and working conditions individuals encountered in the tenements and the sweatshops (Ernst, 1949; Howe, 2004). Tuberculosis was known as the “tailor’s disease,” although it was in no way confined to this immigrant work group (Ernst, 1949; Howe, 2004). This disease and others took less Jewish lives than in other immigrant groups, even though associated specifically with the Jewish immigrant population (Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Stein, 2002).

Pneumonia, cholera, typhoid, typhus, dysentery, scarlet fever, whooping cough, diarrhea, and diphtheria also took their toll (Ernst, 1949; Howe, 2004; Hurwitz, 2002; Spewack, 1995). Other illnesses included those that were associated with fatigue and with working conditions, such as those found in the garment industry (Howe, 2004). The care and treatment of illness in families was typically the purview of the mother and/or the females in the family. Ernst (1949) mentioned the rate of mortality in young children, which would be devastating to the family and especially the mothers.

The Jewish community quickly established health facilities such as hospitals, clinics, and sanitariums (Ernst, 1949; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Telushkin, 2002). Health facilities were essential, considering the dire living conditions, which readily promoted disease (Ernst, 1949; Howe, 2004). Still on the issue of health conditions, the Jewish population fared slightly better than other immigrant populations, as the internal culture and discipline kept personal habits more strictly observed wherever possible (Burt, 2004; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Sachar, 1992).

One source attributed these better outcomes for the Jewish population on health issues specifically to the Jewish orthodox lifestyle.

Rischin (1977) quoted Dr. Annie Daniel, a public health official:

The rules of life which orthodox Hebrews so unflinchingly obey as laid down in the Mosaic code... are designed to maintain health. These rules are applied to the daily life of the individuals as no other sanitary laws can be ... Food must be cooked properly, and hence avenues through which the germs of disease may enter are destroyed. Meat must be 'kosher,' and this means that it must be

perfectly healthy. Personal cleanliness is at times strictly compelled, and at least one day a week the habitation must be thoroughly cleaned. (pp. 86-87)

Rischin (1977) further stated: “If standards of cleanliness were not as faithfully maintained as precept required, the strict regimen of orthodoxy, even when weakened, contributed to the immigrant’s general well-being” (p. 87).

Social Class and Crime

In terms of immigrant class issues, Gentile citizens (non-Jews) of New York referred to the Lower East side as both a ghetto and a slum, calling it “Jew-Town” (Dubofsky, 1968; Levine, 1976; Rishin, 1977; Trachtenberg, 2007). In addition, Gentiles described the Jewish immigrants as criminals, as uneducated or ignorant, and as scum (Burt, 2004). These descriptions typically had xenophobic origins (Burt, 2004; Lubove, 1962).

Crime, vice, and juvenile delinquency were also social issues affecting the living and working conditions of this population, however the number of Jewish immigrants involved in crime was less than for other groups (Ernst, 1949; Rischin, 1977). Organized crime had its share of Jewish gangsters (Stein, 2002). Police officers, politicians, and criminals collaborated closely (Rischin, 1977). No doubt, residential and occupational overcrowding and poverty contributed to illegal activities (Rischin, 1977). Illegal activities of the immigrant group do not specifically identify any female involvement in these criminal activities.

Women however would have been included in the stereotypical xenophobic labeling of this ethnic group, and in the prejudicial attitudes associated with being ignorant “scum” (Burt, 2004).

Due to Jewish immigrants’ immediate concerns for the safety of the Jews remaining in Eastern Europe, great personal sacrifices were made in terms of essentials, in order to fund the travel of the immediate and extended family members (Glenn, 2002; Rischin, 1977; Telushkin, 2002). According to Schneiderman (1967), one of their first conversations after she and her aunt arrived in America and met her father was about the plan to bring the rest of the family to America. The plan involved the three of them working in the garment industry in order to earn the resources to make this possible. Immigrants often came to America, made similar plans, and then managed to bring their families later (Glenn, 2002; Rischin, 1977; Telushkin, 2002).

The Russian immigrant group received some additional assistance in adjusting to their immigrant status from the German Jewish community. The German Jewish population in America, which had preceded the Russians by about 50 years, exerted strenuous, relentless efforts in order to improve the social and cultural conditions of the Russian immigrant group (Howe, 2004). The Russians possessed a particular distinction in the circumstances of coming to America. They intended to live here permanently and be at home in the new land, which undergirded their rapid assimilation into the new culture (Diner, 2000; Takaki, 1993). The

qualities of ethnic resilience and fortitude for this immigrant group were evident in the following account: “neither suffering nor nostalgia could induce them to go back to the country of the tsars. They gritted their teeth; they called upon those reserves of stoicism which form so essential a part of *Yiddiskeit*; they settled down, often with savage self-denial, to the task of survival” (Howe, 1976/2004, p. 72). This was the power of clarity, of purpose, and of relentless determination. This was evidence of the understanding and conviction, that there was no home country to which they could return. The covenant they made with America was for life.

Over time both the living and working conditions for the Russian Jewish immigrant group showed modest improvement (Howe, 2004; Woods & Kennedy, 1913). Individuals made sacrifices in many areas in order to improve the lot of the immigrant group. Women would certainly have been a significant part of this process and would have benefitted from these actions. Most important in improving their circumstances, and inspiring and motivating their resilience, were the employment opportunities of this immigrant group, associated with the natural and developed skills they brought with them.

Importance of Skills

By the late 1800s, New York City was the national center for the garment industry and produced 75% of women’s clothing and a substantial amount of men’s clothing (Neidle, 1975; Stein, 2002). The needle trades employed more than a million workers by 1929 (Hardy, 1935). The

Eastern European Jews gravitated to the garment trade, in spite of the long hours, low pay, and sweatshop working conditions (Henry, 1923; Howe, 2004; Reef, 2000; Sanders, 1994; Seidman, 1942; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993; Zaretz, 1934). The work was seasonal with long hours—70 hours per week or more— during the season and little or no work after the season, so job security was always an issue (Dubofsky, 1968).

The garment industry was a match for the skill sets of the Eastern European Jewish population, because of both skilled and semiskilled labor characterizing the industry, and language was not an issue (Abbott, 1969; Howe, 2004; Sorin, 1992; Spewack, 1995). Preceding Schneiderman's (1967) father's decision and action to leave Russia, he struggled to make a living as a tailor in a small village. As Schneiderman (1967) pointed out, "Schneiderman" means "tailor man" (p. 13). The families trained for tailoring, probably as soon as the children could hold a needle and soon after navigate a pattern. Schneiderman (1967) indicated during her childhood in Russian Poland, her father spent long hours at his craft from early morning until late at night, sometimes staying overnight in other locations to complete work, "for the munificent sum of three rubles a week" (p.13). Her father eventually found a job sewing uniforms for the military, and the family moved from the small village to a larger city. Her father's earnings increased substantially, making a transcontinental move possible for Schneiderman and her family. After her father arrived in America, it was only a few months before the rest of the family followed.

This ability to move the family so soon was an advantage not every immigrant family had. Some families came by ones or twos, taking years to complete the family move (Rockaway, 1998). Most found employment in the needle trades.

An overwhelming number of immigrant Jews...flocked to the needle trades. Why? Because those who had already become workers in Eastern Europe brought with them a little experience as tailors. Because the garment shops were located close to the familiar east side streets...and an immigrant just off the boat needed no English in order to reach them. Because some garment bosses were willing to let religious Jews keep the Sabbath and work instead on Sundays. Because the industry had been expanded ever since the civil war, through the use of machinery and the manufacture of readymade clothing, so that large numbers of new hands were needed. Because it took only a little time to learn how to run a sewing machine or press a garment. And because many employers were themselves Jews. (Howe, 2004, p. 82)

The functions of the trade were such the immigrants quickly learned additional skills, such as operation of the sewing machines for garment construction and use of irons for pressing garments (Howe, 2004; Smuts, 1959). Homes, such as they were in the tenements, became workshops and workshops became homes, as the immigrant population worked in the sewing trades in order to survive in the *Goldene Medina* (Burt, 2004; Diner, 2004; Howe, 2004; Levine, 1976; Reef, 2000; Smuts, 1959; Takaki, 1993; Telushkin, 2002). This was particularly true with the invention and sales of the sewing machine, beginning in 1846, which revolutionized the garment industry (Diner, 2004; Reef, 2000; Stein, 1977). Eventually, most of the work of the garment industry occurred in buildings, in factory style settings called sweatshops (Levine, 1976;

Neidle, 1975; Reef, 2000; Sanders, 1994; Sorin, 1992). Workers were for the most part responsible for their own tools and supplies (Spewack, 1995).

The sweatshop environments, hours, wages, working conditions on every level were at least challenging and mostly not safe (Howe, 2004; Neidle, 1975; Reef, 2000; Sorin, 1992; Telushkin, 2002). These conditions affected Jewish women (Dubofsky, 1968; Zaretz, 1934). The social conditions these women faced and endured, particularly the living and working conditions, generated intentions and actions associated with social justice, unions, gender issues, and were all complicated by the language barrier (Howe, 2004; Friedman-Kasaba, 1996; Rischin, 1977).

Challenging social conditions inspired social action and commitment to socialist political leanings and social justice by these women, many of whom devoted their efforts to labor union sympathies or involvement and advocacy for socialist causes (Howe, 2004; Schneiderman, 1967). Nadell (2003) referred to “the gendered spaces American Jewish women created to influence their faith and their people” and “[a] long tradition of women’s social and political activism” (pp. 3, 4). In fact, songwriter and composer Harold Rome immortalized the social activism of women in the garment industry through the production of a Broadway hit musical, “Pins and Needles” (Rome, 1962). The lead song title was “Sing Me a Song with Social Significance” (Rome, 1962). The

musical ran on Broadway for four years, starting in the fall of 1937 (Rome, 1962).

The women of this immigrant group lived in a gendered world and found their stamina and resiliency in their close associations of sisterhood and support (Orleck, 1995). They worked outside and within the bounds of this gender social construct simultaneously, as they created their American assimilation experience. They contributed economically to the family resources, which was historically typical, and they plied their trades where they found them (Rischin, 1977).

Significance of Gender

Immigrant Jewish women found a place in the garment industry in America, as they had been involved in the garment trade as a cottage industry in Russia and Eastern Europe, especially since the invention and utilization of the Singer sewing machine in the 1870s (Rischin, 1977). The garment industry was a well-established trade in America by the late 1800s, and over time women outnumbered men in the industry, comprising 80% of all female factory workers (Abbott, 1969; Commons et al, 1918; Ernst, 1949; Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Reef; 2000; Smuts, 1959). Willett (1902) contradicted the preponderance of Jewish women in the garment trade, indicating that women were restricted from the trade. The author attributed Jewish men's influence as the reason for this (Willett, 1902). No other evidence indicated Jewish women were restricted from

the trade itself, but in fact quite the opposite (Abbott, 1969; Commons et al, 1918; Ernst, 1949; Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Reef 2000; Smuts, 1959).

Sweatshop Conditions

The sweatshop conditions for these women workers consisted of extremely low wages, unhygienic conditions, and very long work hours (Howe, 2004; Levine, 1924). Working conditions for women in the sweatshops were both exhausting and hazardous, and the hazards could include injuries from the sewing machine needles, which would at times pierce the fingers or hand of the sewer (Auch, 2002; Burt, 2004; Meltzer, 1967; Woods & Kennedy, 1913). Female garment workers in the factories, most of whom were very young, endured many unnecessary, dehumanizing, and inflicted difficulties in their sweatshop work environment (Howe, 2004). These included sexual discrimination, class and gender exploitation, what we know today as sexual harassment, and other forms of discrimination, by the manner in which the managers assigned the work, and by the requirements to provide one's own tools to do the work (Ewen, 1994; Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Stein, 1977; Stein, 2002).

Other examples are the way in which the factory operators positioned the women so closely together in the workspace, forbid them to talk or sing, manipulated their pay and work hours, and limited their time in the bathroom (Howe, 2004; Levine, 1924; Newman, 2004; Stein, 2002). Shop bosses did not direct, discipline, or treat men in this manner in

employment situations (Levine, 1924; Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Stein, 1977)

Sexual Harassment

On the issue of gender, examples abounded in the sources regarding ways the shop bosses treated women differently, particularly in work environments, including being marginalized, discounted, and objectified (Cohen, 1995; Spewack, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Nadell, 2003). In one example, the local union representative summoned Rose Schneiderman, as a representative of the Women's Trade Union League, to address and resolve an uncomfortable situation of sexual harassment, in which the factory owner was pinching the young women (Schneiderman, 1967). Schneiderman tactfully, forcefully, and successfully resolved the situation.

“Keep your hands off please” was the first sentence in English that Rose Cohen (1995) learned to speak, as she watched other women fending off unwanted sexual advances (p. 85). The vulgar and obscene language of the males in the garment shops distressed Cohen and served as another form of sexual harassment. Cohen lost the job she enjoyed the most, because she would not submit to the aggressive sexual advances of the shop boss. Women in the garment industry had to be emotionally and physically sturdy and resilient in order to return to the shop environment to support their families (Nadell, 2003). Shop bosses were domineering, biased, unpredictable, and unreasonable, and they ruled with an iron hand

(Foner, 1979; Foner, 1979/1980/1982; Smuts, 1959; Stein, 1977; Tentler, 1979).

Unhygienic Conditions

Usually in a sweatshop tenement building environment with no windows or other ventilation, shop bosses packed women into their workspace so closely together that their bodies constantly touched. They felt the body heat of others and breathed into each other's faces (Spewack, 1995; Stein, 2002). Even seated like this, it was cold for the women when they worked in winter (Foner, 1979; Henry, 1923; Spewack, 1995). Seated on chairs, which usually had no backs, they worked fourteen-hour days with their backs constantly bent over their work, taking small sewing stitches in garments with only lamp oil light for illumination (Duchez, 1911; Spewack, 1995; Takaki, 1993).

In some cases, they had to pay rent for the chairs in which they sat while working (Birmingham, 1984). Workers often had to pay for their own thread and needles, had to rent or own on time contract their sewing machines, while shop bosses docked their pay for any mistakes in garment production (Burt, 2004; Foner, 1979; Foner, 1982; Meltzer, 1967; Neidle, 1975; Takaki, 1987/1994; Tentler, 1979; Von Drehle, 2003). Work hours could be every day, but were usually six days per week (Newman, 2004).

The manager would possibly penalize an employee, by laying off the employee for half a day, for taking too much time in the toilet (Ewen, 1994; Newman, 2004). Most of the time, women only knew their

employers on sight, not by name, and the employers kept no employee records of names or other information (Foner, 1979; Smuts, 1959). There were also incidents of managers short-changing paychecks and clocks being set back, so women would work extra hours and not know it, until they left work (Burt, 2004; Ewen, 1987/1994; Meltzer, 1967; Takaki, 1994).

In the summer, the odors from the yard would come in heavy and foul from the outdoor toilets. The workers were in the same proximity sweating all day while they held the coats they were sewing for the coming winter season on their laps (Henry, 1923; MacLean, 1903; Spewack, 1995). The sound from all the sewing machines was deafening (Auch, 2002; Orleck, 2004; Richardson, 1972; Tentler, 1979). Owners had exit doors locked to keep union organizers out, to prevent employees from taking small items, and they searched workers each day before they could leave work (Burt, 2004; Ewen, 1994; Reef, 2000).

Low Wages

Owners recognized women as a source of cheap labor (Commons et al, 1918; Meltzer, 1967; Tentler, 1979). Managers assigned women, who were often in desperate straits for income, to different tasks with different pay scales than men (Duchez, 1911; Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Smuts, 1959). Women in factories showed better work quality and production, and owners were able to pay them substantially less than men (Meltzer, 1967). Wages were always an issue for women, and the garment

industry in the late 1800s was no exception, with women making only \$3.00 to \$6.00 per week, compared to men at \$6.00 to \$10.00 per week (Burt, 2004; Ernst, 1949; Foner, 1979; Foner, 1982; Henry, 1923; Howe, 2004; Levine, 1976; Reef, 2000; Stein, 2002).

Owners accomplished this disparity through standard pay, hiring, and promotion practices (Tentler, 1979). There was no overtime pay and no job security (Newman, 2004; Tentler, 1979). If the work was not satisfactory in any way, fines were common (Foner, 1982; Smuts, 1959; Stolberg, 1944). At the same time, as Rischin (1977) pointed out, “Virtually every immigrant was enabled to earn sufficient wages to keep body and soul together immediately upon landing in the city. Exploited as [they were] this was a boon” (p. 65). Clearly, this made up to a significant degree for the difficult working conditions and bolstered their attitude and resiliency. All living and working conditions the immigrants encountered in New York were an improvement over the circumstances in tsarist Russia (Sachar, 1992).

Individual Experiences

Bella Spewack’s (1995) experience with sweatshop work was not typical. One of the charities found employment for her in a feather accessories factory. Spewack was not in crowded conditions, and did not experience the oppressive work environment characteristic of the garment trade sweatshops. Spewack obviously enjoyed the company of the other workers, found her work relatively pleasant, and the shop boss treated her

and the others respectfully and fairly. Her experience was quite the opposite of those described by others (Cohen, 1995; Newman, 2004; Orleck, 1995).

In one of her employment experiences, Cohen (1995) resolved to ask for a raise. When she did, her boss's response was: "Say it again. Let me hear you say it again and I'll throw you down the four flights of stairs" (p. 131). Cohen did say it again, as she was going out the door. The shop boss then told her she would be paid on her next working day. Cohen's boss never returned to the shop, and left the whole work crew without a week's earned wages. The social conditions Cohen (1995) endured along with her courage and demand for social justice for fair treatment by her employers serves as an example for other women of her action, determination, and resilience.

Tactics of Speed and Fear

Another characteristic of shop work affecting the women's working conditions was the increasing speed style of factory work performance, which was especially prominent in the garment industry. Often owners did not pay managers or workers by the hour but by production or piecework (Howe, 2004; Spewack, 1995; Takaki, 1993; Tentler, 1979). In some cases, this was devastating to the health of the women workers (Hart, 2004; Henry, 1923; Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Stein, 1977; Meltzer, 1967; Tentler, 1979). There was also the fear about being late to work, which would result in serious consequences including fines,

layoffs or firings, and therefore some individuals even lost sleep for fear of not awaking in time (Smuts, 1959; Spewack, 1995; Stein, 2002).

How did the immigrant community tolerate and cope with these living and working conditions. The circumstances under which these Jewish women chose to leave their countries of origin and to risk the rigors and potential dangers of international travel to a new land required tremendous adjustments to very difficult living and working conditions (Birmingham, 1884; Howe, 1976/2004).

What was it about the country of origin that made America look good? As mentioned previously, the Russian government enacted the May Laws in the 1880s, and the enactment of these laws removed many options for economic sustenance from the Jewish community (Rischin, 1977; Sachar, 1992; Telushkin, 2002). The Tsar's laws and edicts forced the Jews into an area called the Pale of Settlement, and into ghettos, which resulted in a gross overcrowding of the population and little opportunity to provide for individual or collective economic needs (Birmingham, 1984; Sachar, 1996).

Pogroms

In addition to these oppressive circumstances, there were pogroms, episodic attacks on all types of Jewish settlements, instigated by the Tsar, his associates, and his government (Birmingham, 1984; Rischin, 1977, Sachar, 1996; Telushkin, 2002). The first Russian pogrom of modern times occurred in Odessa in 1871, with 300 murdered and thousands

wounded (Diner, 2004; Johnson, 1987). One pogrom in particular, the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, was noted as having lasted three days, resulting in 47 deaths, untold injuries and substantial property loss (Gilbert, 2007; Rischin, 1977). According to Birmingham (1984), Kishinev resulted in 49 deaths, “and more than five hundred maimed and mutilated” (Birmingham, 1984, p. 68).

As mentioned previously, one of the intentions of the pogroms was to rid the country of non-Christians (Birmingham, 1984). Russia was the only European country in Europe, with a formal government policy of anti-Semitism (Johnson, 1987). Johnson (1987) further states: “Of course the government inspired and permitted the mob action in the first place, and the whole aim of the regime was to bolster its crumbling popularity by attacking an easy target” (pp.364-5).

Cohen (1995) referred to an episode immediately preceding her father’s first disappearance/attempt to leave Russia, in which he left “on a three days’ journey,” and when he returned did “not look like himself” (p.13). There was an implication Cohen’s father had witnessed something or heard of something, which profoundly affected him. When he arrived back home in this condition, his behavior was different, and he would only go out at night. When he returned he went out for three nights in a row and then left their village in his first attempt to reach America. Shortly after Cohen’s (1995) father left, his wife received a letter from him saying authorities had stopped him and arrested him at the border and he was on

the way home. Cohen's father arrived home in poor physical condition, and left again immediately. Then somehow, this time he eluded the authorities, as his next communication to his family was from Prussia, where he had clearly escaped the long arm of the Russian authorities, and prepared to depart for America (Cohen, 1995).

The pogroms were a fact of life for the Russian Jewish community. Sachar (1992) indicated a Tsarist government commission attributed the pogroms to "Jewish revolutionary activity" and "economic exploitation" of non-Jews (p. 117). There was an association between the revolutionary activity and the Jews' commitment to socialism, which equated to the elimination of the persecuting Tsarist government (Birmingham, 1984). Jewish worker's efforts to organize labor unions and trade unions fed the fires of the pogroms (Birmingham, 1984). Government officials and other Gentiles deliberately and constantly humiliated Jews publicly, in order to emphasize their different or less than human quality, thereby "perpetuating the pogrom instinct" (Johnson, 1987, p. 361). The pogroms were the cruelest of atrocities, perpetrated on the Jews (Birmingham, 1984; Diner, 2000; Eliach, 1998; Gilbert, 1998; Mamet, 1995).

The decades of persecution had had at least one positive effect—a Darwinian principle had been proved, and only the hardest and toughest had survived. Years of common martyrdom had instilled common strengths. Proud and cynical, those Jews who had made it through the pogroms had begun to see themselves as a kind of aristocracy of endurers. (Birmingham, 1984, p. 38).

The worst of circumstances spawned and refined their resiliency. It could also be said that it was only the hardest, toughest and luckiest--those with *mazel*, with luck—that survived. Their only recourse seemed to be emigration to America, and they brought their resiliency with them (Birmingham, 1984).

Treacherous Travel

For Cohen (1995) and her aunt the complicated and unpredictable journey to America included many hazards. They hid in wagons, crossed borders illegally, paid bribes to authorities, fended off aggressive sexual advances, and finally boarded a ship for the safe discomforts of seasickness and steerage accommodations. Over time, immigrants became more sophisticated with the process, and took advantage of knowing the experiences of those who had gone before (Howe, 2004). Certainly, Cohen's (1995) mother's decision to sew money into the waistband of Cohen's clothing was evidence of knowledgeable planning based on others' previous experiences of theft or loss.

The ocean liner steerage accommodations, "reduc[ed] people to a common misery" (Howe, 2004, p. 41). Cohen and her aunt experienced plenty of this, as she recounted: "We were deathly seasick for three days" (Cohen, 1995, p. 62). The journey by ship took a little over a week. Cohen and her aunt found themselves standing on the American shore, having safely arrived. Cohen was 12 years old; her aunt was a young

woman. They quickly connected with Cohen's father, who secured a rented room for the three of them on the Lower East Side.

What mattered about America was not that the kitchen sink was also the family bath- and washtub, or that the entire tenement was served by a single common toilet that often didn't work. What mattered was that one no longer lived in dread of the gloved fist pounding on the door at night, of one's barely adolescent son being conscripted into the czar's army, never to be seen again, or of being forced to stand by helplessly as one's mother or sister was raped and disemboweled by drunken Cossack soldiers. (Birmingham, 1984, p. 23)

The combination of these factors made the American experience quite bearable (Sachar, 1992). In addition, the Jewish community no longer had to live in fear and peril with every Christian religious holiday, which were notoriously the times these attacks would occur (Birmingham, 1984).

Schneiderman (1967) reflected on the awareness of conditions in the old country around the time of the Christian holiday of Easter, which coincided with the Jewish holiday of Passover. Regarding the family's first Passover in America, she noted: "There was an abundance of food but, more important, there was a sense of safety and hope that we had never felt in (Russian) Poland" (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 26). The abundance of food was due to her father's successful employment and prior to his premature death. The safety and hope was because they were grateful immigrants, in spite of the many challenges of the new land.

The previous persecutions and oppressive circumstances in Eastern Europe and Russia had instilled resiliency and a creative ability to turn negative circumstances into opportunities for this immigrant group

(Birmingham, 1984). Ironically, these cruelties, in a mega-structure view, forced the massive immigrations to America, ultimately saving a remnant of Jews from the destruction and devastation of the Holocaust (Diner, 2000). The pogroms, and the subsequent absence of them in America, substantially enhanced the positive aspects of this immigrant group's view of the social challenges and their new American way of life.

Women workers looked to each other for their job satisfaction and rewards in the relationships they developed in the workplace (Orleck, 1995; Tentler, 1979). In this way, women, through an experience of sisterhood in their shared experiences, were able to support and lift each other up in difficult times and situations (Dill, 2002; Dowd & Jacobs, 2003; Schneiderman, 1967). Women chose to involve themselves in the acts of mutual aid associated with immigrant social clubs, which provided a supportive culture (Blatt & Norkunas, 1996). Working women's identities were complex, due to their roles with family and community, outside of employment (Williams, 2003). This was particularly true for working mothers, as the responsibility of raising children primarily fell to the women (Tentler, 1979). The childcare situation was particularly difficult as childcare in some cases was difficult to find, and parents left some children at home with minimal supervision out of dire necessity (Tentler, 1979).

For some more than for others, economic circumstances did generally improve over time for the majority of immigrant families.

Women persisted in moving their families as often as they were able in order to improve their living and working conditions, as they utilized their resiliency and persistence, and slowly improved their economic circumstances (Cohen, 1995; Diner & Benderly, 2002; Spewack, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967). This resulted in improved social conditions for the immigrant group.

For example in 1903, thirteen years after immigrating, Schneiderman's (1967) mother accomplished the move up in living conditions.

By this time we were living on Second Avenue in a steam-heated, elevator apartment house. How did we get such luxury? Again, it was Mother's doing. Throughout the years she struggled to pull us up one rung of the ladder at a time, even if it meant we were forever moving. Finally she figured the only way we could live in a decent apartment was to move into one and take a lodger or two. When Mother made up her mind, things always happened. (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 53)

This was the path, the relentless climb, and the determination of the Jewish mothers to improve the living conditions of their children.

For Spewack (1995) and her mother several tenements were home, as they moved frequently. Hence Spewack's autobiography title: *Streets*. Spewack and her mother lived on many of the streets, some for a short time and some for longer times, and nothing for very long. This was also the pattern in the Cohen (1995) and Schneiderman (1967) autobiographies, to move up in the neighborhood and improve the living conditions each time, but the frequency of moves was not nearly as often as that of

Spewack and her mother. This moving up to improve living conditions, and moving out when economically possible, was typical in this immigrant group (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004).

In the Progressive Era, there was also an economic conundrum of conflicting social values for the immigrant Jewish population (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977). The social conditions, the social challenges of the women in this immigrant group affected their lives at the time, as well as generationally. Both the men and women of this immigrant group had come from independent family business origins, many having been small business owners in the old country, which equated to the American middle class (Howe, 2004). At the same time, they were heavily influenced and driven by their passion for revolutionary ideas of equality and social justice and were of necessity part of the working class on their arrival in the new country (Howe, 2004). This created remarkable conflicts of interest, ideologically, but the survival needs won out.

Assimilation

This Jewish immigrant group also had a unique and differentiated assimilation experience. According to Howe (2004), Jews had centuries of experience living as minorities in a sea of universal hostility. Consequently, they did not need to expend energy coping with minority status, compared to other immigrant groups, as they had long ago adjusted to this cultural and social dynamic (Howe, 2004). Jews also had

experience living in both an inner and an outer world or walking between worlds, due to this intense and distinct minority status consisting of culture, religion, and ethnicity (Howe, 2004). This created conditions and issues, which were considerably more complex than that of the typical immigrant experience.

In the American immigrant experience, women in Jewish families were particularly suited to the rigors of immigrant life and the essential adjustments in the new world of America, as they “held things together and coped best with the strange new world” (Howe, 2004, p. 174). These women possessed a practical nature and skill set and had the ability to find opportunities to make money and feed their families, even in the midst of significant change (Howe, 2004). “[T]he immigrant mother cut her path through the perils and entanglements of American life” (Howe, 2004, p. 177). America gave these women opportunities, and they took advantage of them, by utilizing their inner resources, their instincts for survival, adaptation and even for fighting when necessary (Birmingham, 1984). “For courage, the immigrants banded together and began the long climb out of wretchedness” (Spewack, 1995, p. xvii). The long climb out for these women required many resources.

There was another source of resilience available to the women of the Jewish immigrant group (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). This involved their connection and experience with the natural world, the world of trees and grass and sunlight, a world far away

from the tenements and crowded living conditions of the Lower East Side. The influence of the natural world was substantial and noted in the women's life stories (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

Influence of Nature

Cohen (1995), through her connection to the charitable organizations, had the opportunity to go to the country for parts of the summer for several years, as she assisted the caregivers with younger children from the city immigrant population. A benefactor had purchased White Birch Farm for the settlement charities to be a summerhouse for needy children. In the first part of Cohen's autobiography, she described her experiences out in nature in her *shtetl* life before coming to America, in the natural world of trees and flowers, and her enjoyment and affection for this part of her life experience (Cohen, 1995). Nature was of significant importance to her early in her life, and something she did not have in America initially. The turbulent, active cityscape of the Lower East Side surrounded her, and she was far away from streams, trees, and flowers, where she was used to finding solace, comfort, and even some level of companionship (Cohen, 1995).

When Cohen (1995) had the opportunity to return to nature at White Birch Farm, after several years in the Lower East Side, she described her awakening experience. "There was the great quiet. The fields lay so still. Yet life seemed to be teeming and the air was filled with silent voices. Then it began to appear as though things were coming out

of a dream. It was all so strange yet familiar...I soon recovered my spirits as well as my health” (Cohen, 1995, pp. 261-262). Cohen’s return to nature coincided with her return to the aspects of health and well-being she had been missing, as she had experienced a persistent chronic illness, since her arrival in New York.

Cohen was particularly in tune with nature, as was evident in her voice on this:

At home in our village with the first warm days the birds would return to our neighborhood and we could hear the ‘click, click’ of the storks that came back to build in the old stump in the cemetery. In the air there was an agreeable smell of the moist earth warming in the sun. The earth seemed to swell and burst right under our feet so that we could almost feel the plant life pushing its way to the light long before we could see it. (Cohen, 1995, p. 136)

This was a woman in love with nature.

Spewack (1995) related the importance that an opportunity for working outside of the city assumed for her: “the idea had taken hold of me (to look for a job in the country)...I saw green hills and bottomless skies” (p. 122). In the middle of a job, which her mother managed to get for both of them at a summer resort in the Catskills, Spewack (1995) noted that outside the incredibly hot kitchen piled with used pots and pans to wash, there was “blue sky and a host of buttercups and daisies” (p. 125). Spewack took her little brothers outside for the afternoon as soon as she finished the work in the kitchen, and relished the experience. Sadly, they could not keep the job, as the children were too disruptive for the

manager, and after a short time, they returned to the oppressive and limiting environment of the cityscape.

Later, Spewack (1995) purposefully sought out employment on her own in the country, and spoke of “the solitude of sun-sheathed trees” and managed to remain in the job until all the students left the country facility at the end of the summer (p. 146). Spewack spent her free moments outside, alone, or in the company of the other workers. Spewack (1995) described her return from the country to the city in stark and even terrifying images:

I felt that I had returned to a walled city, a city whose sordidness none could escape. As I walked up the dark, warmly damp stairs, I felt the walls were coming closer and closer—that soon they would crush me like a huge nutcracker. At another moment, I felt as if my clothes were on fire and that I was running in a panic, thinking to stop the flames that were stealing up to my neck. Yet I knew as I ran that the fire was enveloping me—that I could not escape. (p. 151)

Here was the image of fire, in her mind, to deal with the living conditions of the Lower East Side. The contrast in Spewack’s descriptions between her city and country experiences was moving, and full of an emotional charge. Spewack’s appreciation of and longing for the country, for nature, was obvious in her accounts.

Schneiderman (1967) recounted her experience with an element of the natural world. There was evidence of the positive effects of nature even in the experience of working with clay, a product of the earth, and the resiliency it offered. “Pottery was the great healer. The girls used to come in tired from their long hours of tedious work (in the garment

industry) but when they put their hands into the clay to prepare it for use, the tensions of the day began to disappear and life became peaceful and happy” (Schneiderman, 1967, pp. 157-158). Like working the soil with their hands, an outdoors activity, the pottery clay helped the girls, as Schneiderman observed, with the healing and revitalizing power of nature.

Summary

How were the women able to deal with their living and working conditions and move forward? The women exhibited resiliency, by returning to their jobs day after day, in spite of the difficult and oppressive working conditions, low pay and various manifestations of gender discrimination (Cohen, 1995; Glenn, 1990; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). They exhibited persistence in their union involvement and resilience during their union strike participation (Birmingham, 1984; Downey, 2009; Glenn, 1990; Schneiderman, 1967). They persisted in moving their families as often as they were able in order to improve their living and working conditions, as they determinedly improved their economic situation (Cohen, 1995; Spewack, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967). “With the resilience and ingenuity that often emerge among a people confronted by a common enemy, the Russian Jews had learned to adapt their lives to uncomfortable situations, to turn disadvantages into advantages” (Birmingham, 1984, p.22).

Ethnicity, immigrant class/culture and skills all were associated with the characteristic of resiliency for the Jewish immigrant women along

with their character assets, experiences, and ability to adapt. This was the sum and substance of their survival, their resiliency. The cohesiveness and interdependence of the women contributed to their progress and reinforced their ability to regroup and move forward with their lives in the *Goldene Medina*. Their persistence, effectiveness, adaptability, courage, determination, and relentlessness all contributed significantly to their progress. Examples of individual women illustrate these themes. Through survival, resiliency, and choosing life, the women internalized a habit of courage. This habit of courage lifted their voices and propelled them forward in their daily lives, lives filled with resiliency and power.

CHAPTER FIVE JEWISH WOMEN'S POWER

Men survive because of women...
 Women survive because of women...
 The world survives because of women.
 (Julie Celeste White, née *Gabrielle Shulamith*, personal
 communication, August 2011)

Russian Jewish women exercised power in their choice to immigrate, to leave a hostile, unsafe country behind and strike out to find a new world, which could offer freedom and opportunities and safety for their families (Birmingham, 1984). Economic opportunity, economic power, came to them in the form of higher wages in America than they could make in Russia, even though they were still paid less than men (Birmingham, 1984). Empowering themselves to make this transition in their lives, to make their home in a new country, gave them an opportunity to develop in ways they had only begun in the old country, such as leadership and involvement in labor union activities (Rischin, 1977). The Jewish immigrant women experienced empowerment in their lives and exercised power in their choices.

Considerations Regarding Power

Power is a term that stirs many opinions and emotions. In the lives of these Jewish immigrant women, power meant the ability to make choices, and live their lives free of centuries of persecutions, in the new land of America (Takaki, 1993). The women allied with each other in the sorority of sisterhood (Orleck, 1995). They sought respect in their work environments, and they exercised moral power in their commitment to

social justice (Schneiderman, 1967). Power also worked on them, affected them, as in the power of the social constructions, which profoundly affected the quality of their lives (Takaki, 1993).

The challenges of the social constructions these women faced were “power motivators,” environmental factors or social conditions which motivate individuals to take action to change their circumstances for the better. The living and working conditions, which inspired and even propelled the women to improve their lot and the circumstances of their families by working 18 hour days, year after year in the garment industry, and by taking in boarders when necessary (Cohen, 1995). Cohen (1995), Spewack (1995), and Schneiderman (1967) all suffered from feelings of inadequacy and emotional pain and experienced power motivators in the form of their educational struggles and the grinding poverty that shaped their social experiences. All three came from families that required some sort of social services to help them survive at various times and circumstances, and all three expressed embarrassment and shame over needing social service assistance (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). They also succeeded in becoming well educated, and professional writing was a vocation or avocation in their lives (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). The challenging social circumstances they endured, and accompanying negative and painful feelings they experienced likely served as power motivators, which moved them forward to succeed (Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

In 1909, the manner in which the authorities treated the striking women during the labor union's Strike of the Twenty Thousand, as well as other union strike activities, served as power motivators to push the union movement forward (Schneiderman, 1967). These power motivators inspired actions by union members and leadership to seek social justice for women in the garment industry (Downey, 2009; Schneiderman, 1967). Because of her participation in the Strike of the Twenty Thousand, Pauline Newman, one of Schneiderman's associates, opted for deeper union involvement, (see Appendix A). She began raising funds and organizing (Kerber & De Hart, 2004). Effective union activities certainly required an informed sense of power and ability to act for both members and leadership.

Moral power as exercised by these Jewish women immigrants was the moral power, which was committed to holding others accountable, as they lived their own lives with accountability, fighting for the rights of working women. These women exhibited a moral power, personally, educationally, and experientially in the ways that they held themselves accountable, as evidenced in their activities of service (Orleck, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967). The four women most influential in the labor union movement, on behalf of women in the garment industry, surely met this description and terminology. They were Rose Schneiderman, Clara Lemlich, Pauline Newman, and Fannia Cohen (see Appendix A) (Kerber

& De Hart, 2004; Neidle, 1975; Orleck, 2004; Reef, 2000; Sachar, 1992; Wertheimer, 1977).

The relationships between these four women were certainly of the sisterhood type and the quality of respect was evident in the writings and personal accounts (Orleck, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967). According to Orleck (1995), “Young women workers were moved by the idea of sisterhood... the relationships they forged ...were intense, melodramatic and deeply loyal” (p. 35). Women workers looked to each other for meaning and rewards in their work environments (Orleck, 1995; Tentler, 1979). The sisterhood relationships provided the women with support and empathy through the difficult times (Dill, 2002; Dowd & Jacobs, 2003). Orleck (1995) confirmed, “Each in her own way, Newman, Schneiderman, Lemlich, and Cohn all embraced the ideology of sisterhood propounded by feminists and suffragists” (p. 34).

Schneiderman (1967) referred to her feminist values of sisterhood and collaborative relationships with other women, thus providing an example of the value and commitment women characteristically placed in relationships. Schneiderman was a caring, capable, and competent friend and colleague. She established enduring relationships, particularly with three other feminist leaders in the union movement, Clara Lemlich, Fannia Cohn and Paula Newman. These women shared a primary aspiration, that working women should be able to realize some of their dreams (Orleck, 1995).

These marginally educated immigrant women wanted to be more than shop floor drudges. They wanted lives filled with beauty—with friendships, books, art, music, dance, fresh air, and clean water. “A working girl is a human being,” Newman would later tell a legislative committee investigating factory conditions, “with a heart, with desires, with aspirations, with ideas and ideals.” That image nourished Newman, Schneiderman, Lemlich, and Cohn throughout their long careers. And it focused them on a single goal: to reshape U.S. society so that “working girls” like themselves could fulfill some of their dreams. (Orleck, 1995, p. 16)

On the subject of respect for working women in the garment industry, Newman in her own account provided an example of the lack of respect evident in the working conditions of the women, when she said: “The employers didn’t recognize anyone working for them as a human being” (Kerber & De Hart, 2004, p. 342).

In another example of the use of personal and moral power, Schneiderman and her friends and colleagues lived their values and built the women’s union movement. They did this in their time and generation, to the benefit of all of us who are employees today. By Schneiderman’s (1967) own account, she had a hand in:

the battles for the eight-hour day, minimum wages, prohibition of nightwork for women, control and regulation of homework, equal pay for equal work...compensation for domestic workers, the right of hotel workers to have one day off in seven, compensation for women during pregnancy, abolition of child labor, and unemployment insurance. (p. 7)

These accomplishments represented Schneiderman’s lifetime of work for social justice as a powerful and competent feminist leader. The world of work for women improved then, and is far

better today, because of Schneiderman's lifework and selfless dedication to a higher standard.

Cohen (1995) also reported participating in union activities in her autobiography, as she watched the men around her do so. Cohen attended a large union meeting, where she realized the words of the speaker were strongly influencing her, as she felt he was speaking most especially to her:

Each one of you alone can do nothing. Organize! Demand decent wages that you may be able to live in a way fit for human beings, not for swine. See that your shop has pure air and sun, that your bodies may be healthy. Demand reasonable hours that you may have time to know your families, to think, to enjoy. Organize! Each one of you alone can do nothing. Together you can gain everything. (Cohen, 1995, p. 127)

When referring to her feelings about being a union member Cohen (1995) said, "I'll always remember how proud I felt when the first evening at seven o'clock the presser blew the whistle and I and the other girls stood up with the men" (p. 127). Prior to unionization, bosses forced workers to stay late, and set clocks back (Burt, 2004). Obstacles presented barriers to joining the union, but women like Cohen did not let the obstacles stand in their way.

The women encountered obstacles in their work and in their lives. These formidable obstacles could prevent the women from accomplishing their goals and purposes. Their courage and resiliency helped them face the obstacles, and they utilized their personal power to move forward.

Hegemony of Obstacles

Obstacles were many, some of which were lack of economic resources and dependence on social agencies, anti-Semitism, and religious conversion (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). Most of the obstacles were practical matters and conditions associated either directly or indirectly with the living and working conditions. The challenging social conditions of the Lower East Side of New York City, where the immigrant Jewish women lived their lives, were many (Birmingham, 1984; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977). In order to deal with these obstacles the women mobilized and exercised their personal power to make choices, about what was best for themselves and their families (Nadell, 2003). Rather than allowing defeat, they chose empowerment and utilized the “both/and” model, rather than an “either/or model” multitasking with their lives and daily routines, to cope and creatively respond to the obstacles (Nadell, 2003; Orleck, 1995).

Lack of Resources and Social Agencies

Lack of resources and dependence on social agencies were evident in the young lives of Cohen, Schneiderman, and Spewack, and for the Jewish immigrant group as a whole (Birmingham, 1984; Cohen, 1995; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). The duress under which they left the old country and the living and working conditions they found themselves in when they arrived in America created this lack of resources (Howe, 2004).

For example, David Bressler wrote a letter to Mr. Isaac Kuhn of Champaign, Illinois. Bressler served as President of the Industrial Removal Office [IRO], an agency created to transport East European immigrants to other Jewish communities in cities and towns in America where they could find employment. He spoke to the condition of the immigrant group in the Lower East Side in a letter dated Feb. 15, 1911.

They come to America, but after they have paid their transportation expenses, they land here practically penniless, so that what was intended as immigration to America becomes very largely immigration to New York...of all the Jewish immigrants that arrive at the port of New York, more than 70% take up their permanent residence here. We now have approximately a million Jews in New York City, and you will readily appreciate...the problems of poverty and non-employment incidental to so large a population...we always have a very large surplus of labor.
(Rockaway, 1998, pp.99-100)

Bressler (as cited in Rockaway, 1998) described the economic and employment issues clearly here, which had everything to do with their difficult living and working conditions. Moving out of New York to other parts of the country helped some immigrants gain an advantage, however this was not even a remote option for most (Rockaway, 1998). In addition to the crowding, unemployment and poverty, there was also the matter of anti-Semitism, the proverbial social stigmatism and ground for persecution specific to the Jewish people.

Experiences of Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is about power and certainly about moral power. Anti-Semites exercise the power of discrimination and abuse toward Jews. Jews and those who ally with them exercise moral power in opposing this

manifestation. Any anti-Semitic incidents the immigrant group encountered in America, they undoubtedly chose to measure against the pogroms and the May Laws of Eastern Europe and Russia. As Diner (1992) pointed out, the immigrants found unprecedented freedom.

When it came to defining America, the immigrant Jews and their children knew that they had arrived in a place that offered them liberties and opportunities unknown in Europe. They described America in their letters, memoirs, sermons, and newspapers as Europe's polar opposite. All of the liabilities of their home countries—the restrictions and the virulent anti-Semitism—faded in America. (p. 227)

No pogroms occurred in America. Nevertheless, anti-Semitic incidents occurred. Cohen (1995) recounted events on a night of national elections, after witnessing a group of Gentile men on the street celebrating the election results, charging and punching at the Jewish men who walked by a group of anti-Semitic men. Saloon customers congregated on street corners and around bonfires. Under the influence of alcohol, they experienced less restraint on their anti-Semitic urges, and acted on them against the Jewish population. The Jewish community was quite familiar with this scenario (Cohen, 1995).

Cohen (1995) witnessed the absence of Jewish pedestrian traffic on the street below her window, as she watched for her father's return at dusk on this particular evening. "I had seen from the first that Jews were treated roughly on Cherry Street" (Cohen, 1995, p. 104). In her account, Cohen sensed the Jewish neighborhood anxiety around the post-election activity of the Gentile crowd. "I noticed with fear that not a Jew was to be seen on

the street,” as she watched for her father’s return (p. 101). Cohen witnessed at least two incidents of physical attack by the crowd on Jewish men, one of them her father. She watched from the window of their second story apartment, as a group of men from the crowd went after her father. Cohen’s father managed to get away from the mob, as she ran down the stairs outside their apartment, to try to help him escape. When Cohen met her father on the stairs inside the tenement building, she recounted, “I was beside myself with joy to see him alive” (p. 103).

Cohen’s statement illustrated the life-threatening peril with which the Russian Jews were accustomed to living. These types of physical altercations were mostly the result of contact with some members of other immigrant groups, specifically Irishmen and Italians (Howe, 2004). Interestingly in contrast, there were union organizing alliances between Jewish women and Italian women, who worked shoulder to shoulder in the garment industry (Orleck, 1995). In addition, Irish women chose to walk on the street with Jewish men, in order to help them move past the anti-Semitic offenders (Cohen, 1995). Apparently, the women of the various immigrant groups chose an alternative method of relating, a different type of demonstration of power. Anti-Semitic conditions in America focused more on exclusionary and “civilized” anti-Semitic actions, such as denying club memberships and college admissions, restricting property purchase in certain residential neighborhoods, and not hiring for jobs (Birmingham, 1984; Rischin, 1977).

In a similar incident, Spewack (1995) experienced an altercation on the street with a gang of Gentile boys, along with her family members and friends. Spewack gave a graphic description of the anti-Semitic street encounter, which involved Spewack, her mother, one of her mother's boarders, and a couple of neighbors.

Several Gentile boys,— not one more than fifteen—came our way. At the sight of us they began to snicker and lurch against each other. Before we were aware of what was happening, one of them pulled at the hem of my white cashmere coat while a second seized hold of old man Lefkowitz's beard and made as if to cut it. . .my mother made free with her hands and feet and the boys scattered. Gathered together at a safe distance from us, they began to shout derisively: "Sheenies, ya damn Sheenies!" They gesticulated wildly with their hands and mimicked among vile epithets: "For vot? For vot, I esk you?" Away into the darkness they sped like leering shadows of the night, but the pain they left for me tortured me even after I had received comfort. (p. 48)

The name calling, bullying, and physical aggression by the perpetrators, the "hoodlums," was characteristic of these experiences (Birmingham, 1984). In this kind of socially unjust situation, feelings of pain and terror were also typical, as was a sense of violation (Cohen, 1995; Spewack, 1995).

In other similar instances, Jewish men sought the accompaniment of women, as this seemed to restrain the ruffian anti-Semitic behaviors. One of the Jewish peddlers told Cohen, that there was a high level of respect for women in America (Cohen, 1995). Cohen also recalled "often having seen Jewish men escorted past dangerous places" (p 105). Irish women also helped the Jewish men move about to do business by accompanying them past "the loafers" (p 105). When Cohen (1995)

discovered her father clipping off his beard, she questioned his choice, to which he responded: “They do not like Jews on Cherry Street. And one with a long beard has to take his life in his hands” (p. 106).

Cohen’s (1995) most difficult moment with anti-Semitic experiences was the impact on a treasured relationship with one of the female staff of the settlement house charities, Miss Farley. An old anti-Semitic story was the cause for concern:

Twice the most serious question came up between us—the question that so often has agitated the whole world, that has often no doubt filled even the kindest Gentile heart with doubt and suspicion, that has made Jews all over the world band together and appeal to God and men against the false accusation—the question of the Jews’ needing the blood of a Christian child for the Passover. This question was by no means unpopular at the time. Somewhere in Europe a child had been found murdered and a Jew was accused and was being tried for his life. (Cohen, 1995, p. 265)

The story is an old canard, a blood libel, against the Jewish people. Cohen (1995) constructed her response and explanation to her friend and mentor out of this personal understanding, hindered by her lack of facility with the English language.

What could I explain? I could not express myself well enough in English. To myself it was quite clear. All our laws tended to point against it. No Jew himself may kill even a fowl but must take it to the one certain man who has studied the laws in regard to it and made it his profession. (Cohen, 1995, p. 266)

Cohen was referring to the *kosher* butcher, the *shochet*, who receives training in the processes and ritual laws for the preparation of *kosher* meat. Jewish religious ritual law quite specifically forbids the ingestion of blood or blood products. Someone at some time looked for an excuse to blame

the Jews for the death of a Gentile child, another opportunity for scapegoating.

Cohen's (1995) friend and mentor entertained the possible truth of the story. "This might have been a custom you know—Perhaps it is not a custom of all Jews—The children would not be apt to know about it" (Cohen, 1995, p. 267). Cohen found herself silenced.

I was dumb with horror and was silent. What could I say? After all the years of her knowing me intimately what could I say! That night Miss Farley and Irene and the two colored women and all the children were together and I felt alone, a stranger in the house that had been a home to me. In that hour I longed for my own people whose hearts I knew. (Cohen, 1995, p. 267)

This is the "other" story, the story of being an "other," a very old story for the Jewish People.

Another facet of anti-Semitism, a very subtle one, is the attempt of Christians to convert Jews to their religion (Cohen, 1995; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977). The implication of such an action to the Jew is that the Christian believes there is something wrong with or lacking in the Jewish religion and the Jews. This is a point of contention with many, but not all Christians, as there are those who respect the right of the Jewish people to be, and to remain, exactly who they are.

Religious Conversion Issues

On the subject of religious conversion, both Cohen (1995) and Spewack (1995) described encounters with Christian missionaries, who focused on converting Jewish immigrants to Christianity. The Jewish community highly opposed these missionary activities and moved to

hinder and prevent them (Rischin, 1977). At least one prominent member of the Jewish community hired individuals to counteract the work of the Christian missionaries within the Jewish immigrant community (Howe, 2004). The community regarded these activities as a threat to the safety and security of the Jewish community and regarded the new immigrants as vulnerable, as the missionaries offered food, fellowship, and Christian conversion opportunities to people who were overworked, tired, and hungry (Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Spewack, 1995).

According to Cohen (1995), her father repeatedly expressed strong concern regarding her association with Gentiles and certain reading materials, all associated with the perceived threat of religious conversion. Cohen's (1995) contacts with settlement charity workers are mostly positive, but she expresses concern and even grief over the attempts they initiate to convert her to Christianity. Again, this was an indication to her that she was not acceptable as a Jewess, and she expressed feeling "miserable" after one such encounter in the hospital (Cohen, 1995, p. 243). Regardless of the best intentions, which Christians espouse on this topic and their missionary work, the Jewish community saw this as at best inappropriate, and at worst negative, offensive, and anti-Semitic.

As the Jewish community attended to business in the Progressive Era, it took powerful action to protect and defend members, through social interventions, legal remedies, and public relations (Howe, 2004). The community was aware of the laws and resources to protect itself in the

event of anti-Semitic acts and general harassment. The women of the community understood the meaning of powerful actions, and made careful choices as they advanced their purposes (Cohen, 1995; Rischin, 1977; Spewack, 1995).

Importance of Powerful Actions

Based on women's responses to the challenges of their living and working conditions, evidently they understood the importance of, and the power in, taking action. Taking action included kinds of excelling and world changing action, along with circumstances which made these actions possible, such as freedom, independence, education and luck—*mazel*. The living and working conditions, the social conditions of the Jewish immigrant women were of a critical nature, and all these conditions demanded action.

Nadell (2003) identified specific qualities she saw as applying to Jewish women activists.

(These are) some of the most distinctive qualities of the Jewish spirit: an eager restlessness, a moral anxiety, an openness to novelty, a hunger for dialectic, a refusal of contentment, an ironic criticism of all fixed opinion. (p. 287)

The immigrant Jewish women took heroic actions— excelling, world changing actions associated with freedom and independence, buttressed by education and enabled by *mazel*— by luck. Nadell (2003) referred to the empowerment of Jewish women to act, influence, and construct their community. According to Nadell (2003), the history of

Jewish women in America demonstrated their “diversity” and “unique narrative” in the context of American feminist history (p. 2).

In this Jewish American women’s history there has been “a long tradition of women’s social and political activism” (Nadell, 2003, p. 4). Nadell (2003) also referred to “Jewish women’s hunger for meaningful action” (p 288). This was the characteristic associated with early years of persecution and privation, which resulted in an understanding, commitment, and passion for social justice.

[B]oth unions and the wider ethnic community recognized how much they had profited from women’s participation in civic life. From a communal standpoint, there would be further benefits in women’s enfranchisement—most important, a doubling of political strength. (Glenn, 1990, p. 216)

This was certainly the case for Rose Schneiderman and Belle Moskowitz, both of whom made powerful speeches and lived passionate, active lives as advocates and political and social forces for social justice (Perry, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967).

Immigrants encountered unprecedented freedoms and associated independence in America (Birmingham, 1984; Diner, 1992; Rischin, 1977; Schneiderman, 1967; Takaki, 1993). Rischin (1977) referred to one aspect of this, noting how differences in ethnic groups were acceptable to all the varieties of immigrant populations, in New York City in the 1800s. Schneiderman (1967) expressed delight and gratitude for her freedom to engage in almost every educational opportunity that came her way. Many experienced freedom from previous threats such as being maimed or killed

through anti-Semitic attacks and freedom from the multiple persecutions of tsarist government and independence from that government's May laws designed to restrict Jews specifically (Birmingham, 1984; Diner, 1992).

Foner (1998) addressed gender and freedom in the Progressive Era.

[W]hile freedom for white men involved an open-ended process of personal transformation, developing to the fullest potential inherent within each human being, discussion of citizenship, race, and gender rested on the essential premise that the character and abilities of non-whites and women were fixed by nature. (p. 71)

Therefore, in this view women and non-Whites were not subject to such freedoms. An implication was here for social justice also. Clearly, social justice was not an option or consideration for this subpopulation.

Gaining an education attained highest priority in the exercise of freedom for the Jewish immigrant women. Jewish women longed, valued and desired opportunities for education (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). Rigorous planning and any necessary sacrifice was the order of the day for these women to fulfill their passion for attaining their educational goals (Birmingham, 1984; Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

Significance of Education

On the subject of education for this immigrant group of women, the Jewish immigrants placed a high value on all forms of education (Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Takaki, 1993; Telushkin, 2002; Woods & Kennedy, 1913). The *Jewish Daily Forward* expanded on this notion,

The Jew undergoes privation, spills blood, to educate his child. In [this] is reflected one of the finest qualities of the Jewish people. It

shows our capacity to make sacrifices for our children...as well as our love for education, for intellectual efforts (Takaki, 1993, p. 304).

One of the most important freedoms in America for this group was free education. Yet, many of the young women ended up supporting family members through working rather than going to school (Burt, 2004; Foner, 1982; Glenn, 2002; Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Orleck, 2004; Takaki, 1993; Telushkin, 2002). Consequently, the young Jewish immigrant women opted for self-education, wherever they could find it or create it.

In the autobiographies of Schneiderman (1967), Spewack (1995) and Cohen (1995), all three women spoke in detail regarding their educational efforts. Schneiderman (1967) had several formal opportunities come to her at various times, as did both Spewack and Cohen. All of the opportunities were associated with learning English. Spewack (1995) taught herself to read English. She and a friend frequented New York City public libraries. By her account, Spewack (1995) was never without a book and went to great lengths to assure this was the case. Most of their learning occurred through their own personal efforts and dedicated diligence to learn. They certainly exhibited the characteristic Jewish passion for learning (Birmingham, 1984, Cohen, 1995, Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

The way out of the living and working conditions and into the American culture for Jewish immigrants was through education, and there was free education in America. At the same time this immigrant group

was educated already, upon arrival, as over 80% of men and about 60% of women were estimated to be literate (Takaki, 1993; Telushkin, 2002).

First generation immigrant Jewish girls took advantage of public schooling in large numbers, alongside second and third generation members of other ethnic groups (Woods & Kennedy, 1913). “Many Jewesses, inspired by the Russian women’s rights movement, also prepared for the professions and were conspicuous as dentists, physicians, pharmacists and lawyers” (pp. 72-73). At the same time, not all were so fortunate, as many a young Jewish woman looked forward to such an opportunity, only to end up supporting herself and others in the sweatshops (Foner, 1982; Glenn, 2002; Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Takaki, 1993).

Sadly, many immigrant women were not able to avail themselves of formal educational opportunities past a certain age. Relentless work schedules reinforced traditional roles for them (Blatt & Norkunas, 1996; Cantor, 1996a; Glenn, 2002). This was particularly difficult for the young women. Brothers or husbands were pursuing their formal education, while the young women were providing family income through work (Glenn, 2002). Nonetheless, the women relentlessly pursued informal educational opportunities and union membership provided educational opportunities as well (Schneiderman, 1967). Schneiderman (1967) made an eloquent statement regarding the purpose of providing educational opportunities for female union members:

[E]ducation for women workers was the cornerstone of our aims, and we wanted it to be of such caliber that it would bring profit to the girls. By profit I mean knowledge and understanding of the times they were living in, which would result in social action. (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 157)

In the public school system, teachers noted Jewish immigrant children were characteristic for their “seriousness, bookishness, industry, and common sense” and their intellectualism was remarkable and challenging for their teachers (Rischin, 1977, p. 200).

According to Birmingham (1984), Jewish students

[I]n Miss Richman’s district—PS 75 on Norfolk Street—the student body was one hundred percent Jewish. It was perhaps natural, then, that Miss Richman should have instructed her teachers—a great many of whom were Irishwomen—in what was special or different about a Jewish child. On the plus side, she reminded her staff, were such traits as the Jew’s idealism and thirst for knowledge. But she cited other characteristics of Jews in general and Russians in particular that teachers might encounter, and might find alien and off-putting. Among these were occasional overdevelopment of mind at the expense of body; keen intellectualism often leads toward impatience at slow progress; extremely radical; many years of isolation and segregation give rise to irritability and supersensitivity; little interest in physical sports; frank and open minded approach to intellectual matters, especially debatable questions. (p. 26)

What students’ characteristics were attributable to culture or which to ethnicity was not clear. Yet, teachers recognized these traits when working with Russian Jewish immigrant students.

Ethnic schools for Jewish girls on the Lower East Side taught English, and home economics classes. These courses emphasized sewing, cooking, and home hygiene skills, supplementing public school education (Cantor, 1996a; Kennedy, 1979). Public education was available for the

young girls, but less available to the older girls (Cantor, 1996a; Kennedy, 1979).

The Jewish immigrant culture highly valued education, made substantial personal sacrifice to educate their children, and took advantage of the free education America had to offer them (Takaki, 1993; Telushkin, 2002; Woods & Kennedy, 1913). Birmingham (1984) stated, “Jewish youths, instilled from the time of infancy with the idea that education was the best avenue out of the ghetto, were not often truants” (p. 78).

Education did include girls and a relatively high number of females were literate (Howe, 2004; Takaki, 1993; Telushkin, 2002). Sachar (1992) pointed out, however, in the immigrant group, education alone did not bring about prosperity. Economic improvements provided time and opportunity for education.

Birmingham (1984) referred to the existence of an alternate message to young women regarding education: “Bookishness was considered dangerous for Jewish girls, who, in any spare time they had, were supposed to study the womanly arts of housekeeping for future Jewish husbands” (p. 54). Bookishness was not the same as literacy. Literacy was very much encouraged for all members of the community, regardless of gender. The implication was that women would have to make a choice between deep involvement in educational pursuits and marriage, an attitude that was by no means exclusive to the Jewish community. Nevertheless, Jewish women had a significantly higher

literacy rate than members of other immigrant groups. These women determinedly pursued educational activities and opportunities as they were able, again consistent with Jewish cultural values (Birmingham, 1984; Cohen, 1995; Howe, 2004; Schneiderman, 1967).

Cohen (1995), Schneiderman (1967), and Spewack (1995) commented and showed concern about ignorance or lack of education. Each woman stressed learning to read, write, and speak the English language. These women understood the power in communication, and the power they lacked when they were unable to communicate adequately in English. Each of them mastered the English language and wrote professionally in the language. They empowered themselves through their efforts and success in gaining an education.

Speaking the language always came first. Much of the education for language was self-taught in the experience of these three women (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). According to Howe (2004), most of the older generation never did learn to communicate thoroughly in English, but their children did manage with much effort to do so.

Spewack (1995) was looking for escape, escape from the neighborhood, from the lifestyle, from the poverty of the Lower East Side. Spewack (1995) was searching for the power to take action for change and improvement of her social conditions. Escape was possible as the girls grew into young women, either through marriage, or through some sort of

employment. Education was always the key. “Some education, much ambition, a lot of luck—again never forget luck—and off they went to claim their job, their pay envelope and their future” (Spewack, 1995, p. xxiv). Spewack’s mother was passionately committed to her daughter’s education and succeeded in providing this through the public school system. “For Bella (Spewack), as for generations of immigrants before and since, the escape hatch was education—both what she found for herself and what she was given” (Spewack, 1995, p. xx). Spewack was into books and was constantly reading, as her skills with English built over time and experience. Spewack (1995) and a friend made a repetitive tour of the New York City Public Library system. They went to all the City library locations, plotting and planning which books they would borrow, and standing in line to check out books immediately, as soon as borrowers returned books to the library.

These young Jewish women were passionate for learning, and reading books was their choice for this experience, and their primary recreation. This was also the experience of Cohen (1995), who carried books with her and read at every opportunity. Schneiderman (1967) commented “I loved school and studied hard” (p. 34). A high priority value in the immigrant Jewish community was ensuring that the children learn English as soon as possible, in order for the immigrant group to move forward with their lives in America (Birmingham, 1984; Cohen, 1995; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Schneiderman, 1967).

Schneiderman (1967) also continued her education at every opportunity, and obtained and carried books with her all the time. The women in this immigrant group got themselves educated any and every way they could. This is an example of their resourcefulness, and ultimately of their actions, determination and purpose— *tachlis*. Their ability to access educational resources and accomplish their goals might also have had something to do with *mazel*, a traditional and important Jewish concept.

***Mazel* or “Luck”**

The subject of luck, of *mazel*, could never have been far away from the Jewish mind or tongue. *Mazel* means “a source of influence ... in the spiritual realms ... associated with ‘good luck’” (Staiman, 1997). To say “Good Mazel” is a common Jewish greeting on auspicious occasions or on any occasion or circumstance, that merits it. Spewack’s (1995) autobiography mentioned “Luck” several times, which is the closest English translation. Much about America worked for the Jewish immigrant women, as they “saw themselves as empowered to act, to influence, and to define the emerging American Jewish communities” (Nadell, 2003, p. 2). They also worked for America, as they adapted to membership in the American workforce and worked for the survival and well-being of their families and their culture (Nadell, 2003). According to Jewish tradition and meaning as noted above, this immigrant group certainly exhibited *mazel* in their survival and subsequent thriving in the

Goldene Medina, in America, the land of freedom and independence even for women.

Spewack (1995) was one of the lucky ones, one with luck, with *mazel*, like the other Russians, who took risks and thrived in spite of the odds and the humble beginnings. According to Limmer,

Tiny Bella would become famous. As a playwright and scriptwriter with her husband-collaborator Sam, she would hobnob with great artists and composers, would be the toast of Hollywood and Broadway. But first, Bella would have to learn English, endure degradations of both poverty and charity, get an education, suffer loss of a beloved brother, and fight her way out of the Lower East Side. Only learning English was easy. *Streets* (Spewack's autobiography) is the story of the hardships. (Spewack, 1995, p. x)

Spewack was also a business woman. The work she chose to do in her early adult life resulted in increased earnings and success, both for her and for the companies for which she worked. Spewack had "psychic freedom ... talent ... rare good luck" (p. xxvii). According to Limmer, Spewack's childhood experience of poverty strongly affected her.

Bella was very, very careful about money. She had been scarred by poverty and understood how it degraded and enslaved. (she) was never free of her past and never forgetful of the obligations her success laid upon her. (Spewack, 1995, p. xii-xiii)

Therefore, others in the community benefitted from Spewack's generosity.

Cohen also experienced *mazel*, in her survival amid difficult circumstances including a chronic illness, and her ability to connect with the right people, especially her relationship with Lillian Wald, the nurse who along with her staff, provided health services to the residents of the Lower East Side (Cohen, 1995; Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977). Ms. Wald

was a powerful mentor for Cohen, along with supporting her health needs and providing opportunities for her to be out in nature (Cohen, 1995).

Schneiderman (1967) experienced *mazel* in finding her way to the union movement, which strongly aligned with her sense of social justice and inspired her. She contributed to the Labor Union Movement's advances initially as a union member and ultimately as a national leader.

Cohen (1995), Spewack (1995), and Schneiderman (1967) experienced *mazel* as empowering in the course of their lives. Their experiences with *mazel* increased their personal and professional power and success (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

Spewack was on the receiving end of generosity earlier in her life. Spewack (1995), along with many others in the immigrant community, had personal experience with the social agencies and charities serving the needs of the Lower East Side (Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977). These contacts and experiences with the social and charitable agencies and their representatives helped sustain their survival, but were also fraught with tension, stress, and even humiliation (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

Experiences with Charities

Charitable organizations, social agencies, and committed social liberals played a significant role in assisting the Jewish immigrant group in their adjustment to America and supporting their survival through charitable social programs (Cohen, 1995; Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992;

Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). Consequently, these organizations held powerful influence over the lives of the people they helped, and the manner in which the agents of these charitable organizations communicated with the people they were assisting (Cohen, 1996; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). The significance of meanings and perspectives, and how powerful they could be to influence, mold, and shape people's lives was evident in the lived experiences of those receiving charitable assistance. For the most part, recipients of charity in the Jewish immigrant community of the Lower East Side experienced painful embarrassment, shame, and even loss of face, or loss of self-respect (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

Cohen (1995) struggled with accepting help from others in the form of charity.

In my hand was the half dollar, the first direct gift of charity to myself. My face burned. 'I can refuse it,' I thought. 'I can take it right back—but then, I must refuse everything else, the help, the going away (to the country)'—and going away had become a necessity. (p. 260)

Accepting help was fraught with stress for Cohen, and the conflicted feelings she experienced were clear. Cohen experienced shame, a loss of face, which represented a loss of personal power (Beattie, 1989; O'Gorman, 1994). Here also was another reference to the importance of nature in these women's lives. In another instance, when her mother was ill and a young man appeared to ask questions regarding their resources, such as food and coal, Cohen demurred and insisted they did not need

anything, even after no one in the family had had an income for weeks. After his visit, coal and food appeared, but Cohen was able to save face by denying the need. The experience of receiving and providing charity was about saving face, and about maintaining personal power or empowerment (O’Gorman, 1994). It was about finding the way and the means to help, and still protecting the dignity, which represented the empowerment of the person, as this young man managed to do.

In Spewack’s (1995) account at one point, “They (the charity) had ... given her work: renovating worn clothes of the rich for the poor at thirty cents a garment” (p.110-1). In this instance, when the charity provided garment piecework for Spewack’s mother, she and Spewack worked quickly in order to be paid. In a touching scene, they committed to care for others in similar circumstances.

We sat and ripped and sewed worn cloths which the Charity gave us to remodel for those like ourselves. We received thirty cents for each dress. We worked far into the night on the dresses, for both my mother and I wanted each dress to be different from the other so that the child or woman wearing it would not be ashamed of the style. I ripped, designed, sewed on buttons and buttonholes, and ironed the dresses. It gave me great pleasure, even when I was so tired that I could not keep my eyes open. (p. 114)

The experience of poverty was unbearable for Spewack (1995). Her writing gave voice to her lament, while illustrating and giving voice to the power of poverty in a woman’s life. When poverty is powerful in the lives of women and the associated shame, it disempowers them (Beattie, 1989; O’Gorman, 1994). Several times Spewack stated “When would it end?” as she spoke about the living conditions of her life and of the Lower

East Side (p. 108). In one instance, she fantasized about a fire that could take it all away.

It was all so hopeless. When would it all end? I began to drowse and dreamed consciously—that a vast fire destroyed the slums but no one was hurt. Everybody went to the country and there were no more slums. (Spewack, 1995, p. 104)

At another time, Spewack attempted to take a form of action.

When the children went to sleep, I began to gather up the ragged clothing, shoes, bits of stuff I knew my mother would not part with. I wished I could burn them, for it seemed to me that as long as we kept these rags, we would always be kept in our ragged, impoverished condition. The rags were to me chains and prison walls. But I could not, for we could still use this and that, and my mother would not part with her rags. (p. 110)

She lamented, “Our home, always shameless in its poverty, became more wretched” (p. 121).

The time did finally come when Spewack’s (1995) mother could not pay the rent. Her mother went to the charities, hunted down boarders who owed, and to women who contributed to those in need, and came home empty-handed. Spewack and her mother were in despair. This continued for three days.

Our luck changed on the fourth day. The charities gave my mother fourteen dollars—seven with which to move and seven with which to pay her deposit. She found rooms on First Avenue and Forty-ninth Street and we were to move the following day... The house we moved into was not different from the others we had lived in: four tenants on a floor, two toilets in the hall, two tenant families for each toilet; rent to be paid monthly or bimonthly. (p. 110, 114)

Spewack (1995) in her early teens had contact directly with a charity for the first time without her mother. Charity personnel asked to see her and ended up finding her work in the feathers accessory business.

When she came to the charity's location, she received gifts of clothing, which she needed, and much kindness and consideration from the agents. She was surprised and overwhelmed, and reported: "I felt mystified. Never before had such kindness and courtesy been mine from a charity source" (p. 117). Spewack thoroughly enjoyed the gift of clothing, finding items for which she had been longing. After Spewack and her mother tried on their clothes, her mother went to bed, and Spewack had an opportunity to be alone and contemplate her day. "Suddenly, I drop my head into my hands. After all, they are charity clothes. I have no right to be so happy" (p. 118). So therein, lay the conflict, of not wanting to accept help, having to accept help, and then shaming herself after she did accept help! Spewack felt empowered in her happy experience, but disempowered when she connected to the shame she associated with accepting charity (Beattie, 1989; O'Gorman, 1994).

Spewack (1995) explained the importance she attached to having her own eating utensils in a job situation, and then tied it into the meanings she experienced with her circumstances of poverty. She connected how this associated with the charitable organizations' interactions with her.

To me, the fact that I had my own cup and clean dishes was another source of my belief in my ultimate "respectability." I do not know whether I can make it understood how the thought that I was a "charity case" was always with me—how it never left me. Constant charity investigation had made me sensitive. Yet when I ate my lunch in the shop from my own cup and saucer and spoon (which the shop owner provided!) I felt free and 'respectable.' At home I always felt that so long as charity paid our rent and had a

right to investigate us whenever they wished, I was not respectable. I couldn't be. It was a barter. In exchange for the rent they paid, they took from me my self-respect. (Spewack, 1995, p. 135)

Part of Spewack's escape from the Lower East Side inevitably involved re-establishing her self-respect. Schneiderman also had assistance from charitable organizations throughout her childhood after the death of her father, and longed for independence and self-reliance (Schneiderman, 1967).

Feelings of dignity and respectability were empowering for these women (Norville, 2009; O'Gorman, 1994). Accepting charity was a shameful and disempowering experience for them (Beattie, 1989). This was important information about what the best charitable intentions could mean for some individuals, the significance of meanings and perspectives, and how powerful they were to influence, mold, and shape people's lives.

Not everyone who received help from the social agencies or charities felt shame and embarrassment. A letter to the agents of the Industrial Removal Office (IRO) of New York City, communicated a far different experience (Rockaway, 1998). Mr. Chaim Zadik Lubin expressed gratitude in the following letter:

Now dear brothers, you sent me here to a person named Mr. Mann. He tried his best for me and found me a job. You can just imagine how thankful I am. I worked and made a living. Then, with your help, I brought my family here. And, thanks to God, I am making a respectable living. I do not forget you for a single day, and my family and I always pray for you. I wish all of you, who work for such a good cause, health and long life. I only wish other Jews can be helped the way you helped me a year ago. Now I have contributed some money to our society's fund to help our suffering brethren in Russia. (Rockaway, 1998, p. 118)

The Jewish immigrant community obtained the charitable help they needed to survive, grateful or not, and regardless of how each one perceived it and received it.

At the end of her autobiography, Schneiderman (1967) tied union work into the benefits of social government programs.

Working women of today must remember that it was a common desire to improve *all* conditions of life and to secure a greater degree of common justice for all that enabled the National Women's Trade Union League and its local leagues to build a better world...we are better fed and better housed these days and certainly we are much more human in our attitude toward the poor. They are still with us, alas, but thank heaven, we are doing something about them. Instead of paternalism and private charity—those uncertain reeds the poor formerly had to lean on—we now have state and city social-welfare programs which are usually to be commended, for they are administered as much as possible without demeaning the recipients of their help. (Schneiderman, 1967, pp.262-263)

Did having all of these social programs administered by government agencies remove the feelings of shame around needing economic assistance? Did it give individuals enough distance from the helping hand, to avoid any negatively associated experience, as Cohen (1995), Schneiderman (1967), and Spewack (1995) knew too well? They experienced the shame and loss of face associated with accepting charity, and benefitted from experiences when they interacted with others associated with dignity and respect (Beattie, 1989; Norville, 2009; O'Gorman, 1994; One Day, 1987). They lost power or feelings of empowerment in the experience of shame and gained empowerment in an atmosphere of dignity and respect (Beattie, 1989; O'Gorman, 1994; One

Day, 1987). It is most likely there were both kinds of responses to the government-sponsored social programs, as well, with some experiencing shame and others experiencing gratitude. The gentleman who expressed gratitude had an empowering experience with the charitable help he received (Beattie, 1989; O’Gorman, 1994; One Day, 1987). The meanings and experiences about this issue were always individual, even within the Jewish immigrant community.

Summary

The concept of power, the meaning of power generates a myriad of opinions and emotions in individuals and communities. The positive and negative aspects of power are always open to debate, as well as who should hold power and for what purpose, both formally and informally. For these Jewish immigrant women it was about empowerment. Power represented real choices about how women lived their lives, cared for their families, and involved themselves in their community. Both individually and through the strength of sisterhood affiliations, they gained respect in their work environments. They took action regarding the social constructions, the influence of those challenging and difficult living and working conditions of the Lower East Side. They contributed substantially to the success of the Labor Union Movement and labor law initiation and progress for improvement. Women exercised moral power in their commitment to social justice, and to the welfare of their

community, as the power of the social constructions they encountered profoundly affected the quality of their lives.

There were many challenges for them, and most of the challenges were associated, either directly or indirectly, with the common social conditions of the Lower East Side of New York City. They accepted help from the charitable organizations when necessary. In their experiences with the charities, they moved from shame and disempowerment to personal power and empowerment, associated with dignity, respect, and gratitude.

These women took powerful, excelling, and world changing action. They took advantage of the conditions, like freedom, independence, education, and *mazel*–luck, which made such actions possible. Their effective union activities demonstrated an informed sense of power as well as the ability to act on behalf of both members and leadership. The Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era exercised their moral power to improve their lives and the lives of those around them, shaping the life of their community for future generations.

Opportunities to put moral power to effective use involved substantial leadership talents, skills, and abilities. There were capable and powerful women leaders in the Jewish immigrant community, some more publicly prominent than others. All had experienced the challenges and vagaries of minority status and identity as immigrants, women, and

Jewesses. This heritage involved authentic, vibrant, and complex life experiences.

CHAPTER SIX JEWISH WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Opportunities to put moral power to effective use required substantial leadership talents, skills, and abilities. There were capable and powerful women leaders in the Jewish immigrant community, some more publicly prominent than others (Howe, 2004; Orleck, 1995; Perry, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). All had experienced the challenges and vagaries of minority status and identity as immigrants, women, and Jewesses (Orleck, 1995; Perry, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). This heritage was associated with life experiences, which were authentic, vibrant, and complex. Authentic, vibrant, and complex also described the members of this female immigrant group (Orleck, 1995; Perry, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

Aspects and Challenges of Identity

Identity, Jewish women's identity in America, combined a sort of ethnic essence and purpose, which influenced and guided the task of assimilation into the American culture. Women's identity mattered as mothers and workers. "When they worked, the work Jewish women did, defined them as Jewish women" (Nadell, 2003, p.4). Nadell elaborated on the preponderance of Jewish women in the garment industry.

In the feminist context the perception was addressed of the "universal assumption that women's identity and behavior, unlike men's, is rooted in a sense of family obligation and loyalty" (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996, p. 22). Friedman-Kasaba (1996) posed an alternative to this view

by suggesting individuals can inform and transform traditional roles and expectations, moving forward with the influence of pertinent political and economic social constructs on their identities and behaviors. Another way of saying, women do not have to lock themselves into traditional roles. Certainly, Jewish immigrant women found they could fulfill essential traditional roles, while at the same time meeting practical necessities associated with adaptation and assimilation to their new American environment and culture (Nadell, 2003).

In addition, Jewish women founded a particularly female culture. This culture inspired the genesis of Jewish women's organizations, a powerful, effective, and inclusive arm of Jewish women's influence and activism (Orleck, 1995; Nadell, 2003). "Jewish women's organizations grew out of the diversity of class, ethnicity, and the political and religious visions of American Jewry" (Nadell, 2003, p. 4).

Jewish women ran organizations, which required particular strengths and leadership characteristics.

Coordinating work called for the ability to deal with people across differences, to manage information, to run offices, to assess danger, and to handle multiple tasks amid chaos. These are also skills that women must develop to perform their traditional gender roles. (Nadell, 2003, p. 291)

Jewish women have always been masters of multitasking, as they simultaneously ran family businesses and raised and educated many children (Howe, 2004)

The Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era understood they needed a base, a sense of belonging, a way to call America their home. This base was a fundamental need for them in their adaptation and assimilation to their new home (Nadell, 2003). They created this base to provide them with the stability of place from which they could move forward and build their lives and the lives of their families into the future.

Their job was to ensure that their family and the Jewish community would 'make it' in the United States. Within 20th century American Jewish culture, the Jewish woman's body has been the medium for expressing the community's gender, race and class issues. Specifically, Jewish women's bodies have symbolized Jewish ethnicity...as an affluent, acculturating presence. (Nadell, 2003, pp. 291-292)

This was all very different from the *shtetl* life of the Lower East Side where they started. Some noted the "affluent...presence" of Jewish women and the rapid movement of this immigrant group into the American middle class (Nadell, 2003, p. 292). This group accomplished the move from immigrant class into middle class in one generation or less (Birmingham, 1987; Takaki, 1993).

Many associate Jews predominantly with the American middle class, based on historical economic and class predilections (Birmingham, 1984; Rischin, 1977). Centuries of independent, entrepreneurial family businesses, provided necessary survival strategies for Jewish communities around the world (Birmingham, 1984; Rischin, 1977). A few in the American Jewish community resisted the pull of the middle class; Schneiderman (1967) was one of them.

Schneiderman's (1967) motto of "All for one and one for all" represented her emotional bonding with those of like-minded social values, moral power, and passionate commitment to front line work for social justice. Schneiderman committed herself politically to Socialism. Her union organizing work held her in the working class (Schneiderman, 1967). Schneiderman (1967) was proud of her work and her commitment to working women and to the Socialist political party. Schneiderman (1967) admired the European socialist democracies and the benefits they extended to workers. She considered the United States to be behind in these areas for social reform.

Howe (2004) pointed out the group which came to America during the Progressive Era were under great duress.

Many were so shaken by the ordeal of flight and arrival that for a time they seemed all but culturally dispossessed. It would take at least a quarter of a century before they could regain the culture they had left behind (p. 71).

This observation does not seem to hold true for the women immigrants.

Perhaps this is the reason the Jewish women mobilized in the way they did, in order to preserve the culture and to move forward. This was an example of existential realities, which helped propel them into leadership roles (Nadell, 2003). Howe's (2004) comments below on the maternal identity of the Jewish woman must also be considered through the lens of Friedman-Kasaba's (1996) concerns mentioned above, regarding women's identities being inextricably tied to the female household role. Nadell's (2003) view incorporates and clarifies the others

in terms of identity, showing that women held the community together, as they simultaneously cared for their families, and involved themselves in social action. Nadell's view demonstrates their successful implementation of the "both/and" model of Jewish culture sustenance and American cultural assimilation. Here was the Jewish woman as leader.

It was she (the Jewish wife and mother) who would cling to received values and resist the pressures of dispersion, she who would sustain the morale of all around her, mediating quarrels, soothing hurts, drawing a circle of safety in which her children would breathe, sometimes crushing them under the weight of her affection. The successful entry of the immigrant Jews into the American business world would require a reassertion of the male principle, a regathering of authority and aggression—at least outside the home. But in the early years of a family's life in America, it was often the mother who held things together and coped best with the strange new world. (Howe, 2004, p. 174)

Two authors provided detailed descriptions of their households with mothers as the adult authority figure. Schneiderman's (1967) mother was widowed after arriving in America, and Spewack's (1995) father abandoned her and her mother shortly after Spewack was born. The garment industry employed Cohen's (1995) father for years until he eked out enough savings to start a small food market. The family lived in a small apartment above the food market. Cohen's mother was active in running the family business.

Regarding varying views of the transfer of culture these women experienced, Cohen (1995) indicated,

For though I was in America (for almost five years) I had lived in practically the same environment which we brought from home. Of course there was a difference in our joys, in our sorrows, in our

hardships, for after all this was a different country; but on the whole we were still in our village in Russia. (p. 246)

Other sources indicated this immigrant group successfully transferred their culture to their new home in America (Howe, 2004; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993). The sources illuminated the complexity of keeping the Jewish culture, while assimilating into the American culture, which this immigrant group faced and processed (Howe, 2004; Rischin, 1977; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993).

The Russian Jewish immigrants assimilated and became economically successful in less than one generation, a record for any immigrant group (Birmingham, 1984; Takaki, 1993). The German Jewish immigration preceded the arrival of the Russians, and the German Jewish community reached out and helped them (Birmingham, 1984). Even though this enhanced the Russians' rapid economic success, this did not completely account for it (Birmingham, 1984). The Russians were "brash, aggressive, pushy, loud, (and) argumentative" and were willing to take more chances, through their qualities of ethnic character and resiliency (Birmingham, 1984, p. 146). This was more likely the reason for their accelerated success, rather than of having had a hand up from their German cousins. Birmingham (1984) stated; "the Russian Jews seemed to thrive on risks" (p. 147).

Immigrants also had the freedom to assimilate to the degree that they might blend in even more, by changing Jewish-sounding names and making conscious attempts to be absorbed into the American culture

(Takaki, 1993). At times in the Jewish community, individuals left their ethnic connections behind, and chose a sort of racial abandonment, as they “passed” into the Gentile culture. Sometimes this occurred through intermarriage, and sometimes out of fear of anti-Semitism, or maybe simply because they were weary of being “Other,” like an “odd” trying to get “even.” The “odd, trying to get even” is a cultural expression of California minority communities from at least the 1960s.

Those Jewish women who chose to stay in the culture exercised their adaptive talents as cultural entrepreneurs (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996). They understood what community priorities were a fit for them, where their social concerns lay, and they set to work determining how they might best contribute to and lead their community (Orleck, 1995). They did this while they continued to fulfill their traditional family roles and responsibilities—and as they utilized that “both/and” model and just kept multitasking (Howe, 2004; Nadell, 2003).

Cultural Entrepreneurs

Friedman-Kasaba (1996) indicated “cultural entrepreneurs” were women who made active choices regarding cultural values (p. 38). Jewish immigrant women were successful cultural entrepreneurs. They managed to navigate successfully the preservation of Jewish identity and culture along with assimilation into the American culture. These women certainly made active choices regarding cultural values in the process. According to Friedman-Kasaba (1996), cultural entrepreneurs included women who

were active in their cultural identity and experience, engaging and evolving their cultures simultaneously. This description certainly fit the immigrant Jewish women of the Progressive Era and their impact on their own culture in the adaptation to and assimilation into American culture, in the previously mentioned “both/and” model. Their personal transformation actually began in the preparations for immigration.

[T]he process of becoming an earner in pursuit of passage to the new world was itself transformative and thus constitutive of empowerment or of “becoming a person.” America offered these women some previously unimaginable choices and unpredictable outcomes. (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996, p. 62)

One example of this was Spewack (1995), who became an internationally recognized playwright. She used all of her experiences and circumstances, coupled with her abilities, like a launching pad for her escape from the Lower East Side tenements and neighborhood. Spewack (1995) was a woman of “forthrightness” and of action and became a world-renowned leader in her artistic profession (p. 172).

In addition, Spewack and her husband founded a facility in Israel, the *Ilan Sport Center for the Disabled*, likely associated with the early death of her little brother Herschey. The Spewack’s contribution—*tzedaka*— for funding this facility was done in the finest Jewish tradition, of bringing something good out of loss and adding to the merit and memory of a deceased loved one.

Another example of personal transformation was Schneiderman (1967), who became a nationally recognized labor organizer, and a friend

and advisor to the President of the United States. Nadell (2003) described the women's adroitness in navigating the culture.

Acting to sustain Jewish life in America, Jewish women shaped their faith and their people...as Jewish women 'took possession of America,' they defined new expressions of how to be simultaneously a Jew and an American and a woman. (Nadell, 2003, p.5)

The lives and accomplishments of both Spewack (1995) and Schneiderman (1967) were examples of this process. Theirs were destinies and accomplishments, which no one could ever have anticipated in the Russian Jewish villages of their youth, but in America, the *Goldene Medina*, anything was possible.

Spewack (1995) and Schneiderman (1967) were examples of the more public, prominent women leaders in this ethnic immigrant group. There were more examples, such as Belle Moskowitz, who formed alliances with women who were not from the same ethnic group, but had likeminded social values and commitments (Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992). Frances Perkins was one of these women (Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992).

Feminist Leadership: Style and Substance

Two feminist leaders of the Progressive Era, Belle Moskowitz and Frances Perkins, had both witnessed garment industry conditions early in their lives (Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992). Moskowitz and Perkins assumed social and political leadership roles over time, eventually dealing with social conditions and social justice issues (Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992). Perkins was not a Jewess, but was a powerful feminist leader. Involved in

directly effecting change, she improved working conditions for Jewish immigrant women in the garment industry (Downey, 2009).

Moskowitz served in the career and administration of New York Governor Alfred E. Smith. Perkins served as Secretary of Labor in the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt (Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992). Moskowitz and Perkins were friends and colleagues. Both were associated with the political decisions, social reforms, and the New Deal of the Roosevelt administration, as was Schneiderman (Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992).

Moskowitz epitomized feminist leadership style. In her writings she advocated for collaboration, utilization of influence, and cooperation among women leaders (Perry, 1992). “Much of (Moskowitz’s) later strength as a social reformer lay in her ability to invoke ideals that inspired others and at the same time to devise practical plans for their realization” (Perry, 1992, p. 21). Schneiderman (1967) and her associates were colleagues of Moskowitz and Perkins (Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967).

Schneiderman joined and collaborated with Moskowitz and Perkins in her advisory role to President Franklin D. Roosevelt (Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967). These women were also friends and social activist associates of the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Most importantly, Schneiderman, Moskowitz, and Perkins were strong,

powerful examples of feminist leadership and feminist collaboration(Downey, 2009; Perry, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967).

The term leadership in the context of the Jewish immigrant women's group implies all that feminist leadership is about, such as collaboration, mentoring, and support and the importance of relationships (Orleck, 1995). These characteristics are all qualities, which were in evidence in Orleck's (1995) descriptions of the activities of Lemlich, Schneiderman, Cohn, and Newman, all recognized as feminist leaders. Schneiderman's (1967) own descriptions of her union organizing activities portrayed these qualities as well. Newman (2004), in her matter-of-fact account, spoke of her early union experiences.

"Conditions were dreadful in those days. But there was something that is lacking today and I think it was the devotion and the belief. We *believed* in what we were doing. We fought and we bled and we died" (Kerber & De Hart, 2004, p. 344). Newman was clearly an experiential leader, a leader intimately acquainted with leading from the front not the rear (Kerber & De Hart, 2004). The strength and power of this type of leadership was formidable, providing the means and ability of these women to lead.

Schneiderman (1967) provided feminist leadership in the American Labor Movement for over 50 years as a national labor organizer. As agency head of the National Women's Trade Union League, an organization that in its time fostered, coached, mentored, built,

and facilitated the growth and development of the women's labor movement. She established and supported union locals for women across America. Schneiderman (1967) clarified her motives and values associated with her lifelong commitment, when she recognized familial alliance. This characteristic was common with those who participated in the Labor Union Movement.

Schneiderman's (1967) alliance with three other feminist leaders in the union movement, Clara Lemlich, Fannia Cohn, and Paula Newman, enabled them to collaborate and build the women's portion of the Labor Union Movement in America, on behalf of women workers (Orleck, 1995). Schneiderman, along with Cohn, Newman, and Lemlich, shared common aspirations, and intended to serve the dreams and aspirations of all women workers (Orleck, 1995).

Schneiderman (1967) and her colleagues emphasized the human rights of the individual working woman and worked against their objectification in the workplace and in society.

Women played an important part in seeing that unions continued to exist and in organizing new ones. This is the theme of my book (autobiography), a book which never could have been written if there had been no Women's Trade Union League... my own story is inextricably interwoven with the history of the New York Women's Trade Union League, an organization composed of women from the trade-union movement and their allies, dedicated to helping working women through trade unionism... Today, for many people, being a union member simply means paying dues, but in the early days there were so few of us that if a majority of the members were not active, the union ceased to exist. (Schneiderman, 1967, p. viii, 5)

Schneiderman emphasized the essential nature and importance of feminist leadership in building strength and endurance for the union movement.

Schneiderman and her colleagues made the growth and the flourishing of the women's union movement possible in America. They paid for this success with the dedication of their energies and their lives, in making the women's union movement the focus of their life work (Orleck, 1995).

The importance of union activities and their predecessor, benevolent societies, in terms of feminist leaders, is that this was the most public and most influential venue for Jewish women leaders to exercise their art and craft of leadership (Orleck, 1995). Unions and the benevolent societies devoted to charitable activities provided a base, context, formula, and natural environment for Jewish women's passion for just causes and social needs and for advocacy for social justice (Orleck, 1995). Once more, Jewish women employed multitasking to meet family needs and community needs simultaneously, as they grew and developed their leadership capabilities in their new land of America (Nadell, 2003). Passion for social causes led some women to labor union membership and leadership (Schneiderman, 1967).

Benevolent Societies and Labor Unions

In the 1800s, women began sporadically to engage in union involvement, but men in the Labor Union Movement did not see women's involvement as important or meaningful, even though women did eventually play a key role (Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Schneiderman, 1967).

Anger over impossible working conditions gave women inspiration to unite in common cause. They persisted even though police, judges, and strikebreakers treated them poorly in union strike situations (Foner, 1979; Neidle, 1975; Orleck, 2004; Von Drehle, 2003). Women union organizers attracted and inspired working women to organize (Orleck, 2004; Sachar, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967; Stein, 2002). In strike conditions, young women were bold, forthright, and outspoken in their actions and about their situations, both in the workplace and at home (Howe, 2004; Leupp, 1909; Schneiderman, 1967). Descriptions for these women included the terms “passionate socialists” and “aggressive union women” (Diner, 2000, p. 31).

Marx and Engels (1848/1985/1994) described the progression of the proletariat class’s development of trade unions or “combinations against the bourgeoisie” as a response to the capitalist machinations of the bourgeoisie (p. 10). The authors, who went on to describe the revolutionary qualities of the proletariat or labor class, specifically stated: “The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being blown to pieces” (p. 12). This in itself is a radical, revolutionary statement, which appears to advocate the destruction of governmental structure and community order.

Marx and Engels’s perpetual focus was on the capitalist exploitation of the labor class (Kivisto, 2008). They informed and

inspired the socialist labor movement, as they promoted socialism as a system, which did not exploit the worker (Kivisto, 2008). “[Their] writings are an attempt not only to claim that capitalism inevitably exploits the working class but also to show why and how this is so” (Kivisto, 2008, p. 2). Fromm (1961/2004), commented on Marx’s concept of historical change stating,

Change is due to the contradiction between the productive forces...and the existing social organization. When a mode of production or social organization hampers, rather than furthers, the given productive forces, a society, if it is not to collapse, will choose such forms of production as fit the new set of productive forces and develop them. (p.14)

Certainly, the working conditions of the immigrant women would hamper Marx’s productive forces, and compel social change through the intervention of the labor movement. At the same time Marx’s concept, as interpretively communicated by Fromm, implied if the social change did not come, the society could experience a collapse (Fromm, 2004).

In Russia, the Tsarist government powers regarded the Jewish community as a source of radical or socialist thought and revolutionary activity (Birmingham, 1984; Rischin, 1977, Sachar, 1992). The organizing of the first national trade union occurred in 1895, the “Universal Union of Bristle Workers in Russian Poland,” and this union was primarily Jewish (Rischin, 1977, p. 44). In Russia, prior to this, benevolent societies had formed to support workers, and local union strike actions had taken place involving Jewish workers (Rischin, 1977).

According to Birmingham (1984), the labor movement activities of the Jewish community in Russia most likely contributed to the instigation of the pogroms. Birmingham said, “another, more palpable reason—though it was never as clearly spelled out—behind the pogroms, both the official and ‘spontaneous’ ones, was the desperate and largely unsuccessful, attempts by Jewish workers to organize trade and labor unions” (p. 38). Russia experienced workers’ strikes as early as the 1870s. In 1888, Social Democrats initiated funds and treasuries for strikers in the trades (Rischin, 1977). A socialist organization called the *Bund* formed in Russia in 1897 out of the socialist labor movement, and represented a comprehensive movement against the conglomeration of injustices inflicted on the labor class (Rischin, 1977; Sachar, 1992).

Also in America, non-Jews perceived the Jewish community as a source of socialist, left wing, or radical thought (Diner, 2000). The reputation of the Lower East Side was that of chaos and revolutionary ferment (Birmingham, 1984). Birmingham (1984) spoke to the specific character of volatility and passion in the Russian Jewish personality and priorities. “The Russians had arrived with their souls afire with socialism, with the stirrings of the Bolshevik movement, and were already struggling to form trade guilds and unions to do battle with the ‘bosses’” (pp. 19-20).

Reis noted Russian Jews specifically were quite passionate regarding issues of liberty, which he perceived as distinguishing them from other immigrant groups (Rischin, 1977). “Labor agitation” and

“socialist politics” were included in this perception (Diner, 2000, p. 146). The socialist labor movement in America included both Jews and non-Jews, and mutual ethnic origins, including common language and labor skills, determined affiliations for the formation of trade unions (Rischin, 1977). German and Russian Jewish influences dominated in the socialist labor movement in America (Rischin, 1977, Sachar, 1992). In 1888, Social Democrats initiated funds and treasuries for strikers in the trades (Rischin, 1977).

Referring to the impact of Jewish immigration to America, Rischin (1977) indicated the new immigrants’ passion for the labor movement spurred the growth of the movement substantially by 1920. The activist socialist affiliation of the leaders and membership heavily influenced the Jewish labor organizations (Diner, 2004; Sachar, 1992). The Russian labor movement model came to America, through these activist socialist influences (Rischin, 1977). The Russian immigrant student intellectuals assumed leadership of the immigrant community, formed labor unions, “and accepted Karl Marx, modern Germany’s greatest prophet, and his disciples as their own” (Rischin, 1977, p. 150).

For the year 1880, the women’s garment industry produced an estimate of \$32,000,000 in earnings via the work production of the garment industry workers (Stolberg, 1944). The oppressive, impossible working conditions and the grinding poverty in particular, led to the formation of benevolent societies, mutual assistance organizations, and

labor unions (Cantor, 1996b; Commons et al., 1918; Diner, 2000; Stein, 1977; Stein, 2002; Telushkin, 2002). The impetus for unionizing was always to improve wages and working conditions, including hours, but also included the element of dignity (Orleck, 2004; Rischin, 1977).

Labor unions did eventually reduce the suffering caused by working conditions in factories (Telushkin, 2002). Workers also needed an effective means of responding to the power and priorities of employers, which at times created hardship, inequity, and even danger for workers (Arnesen, Greene & Laurie, 1998; Von Drehle, 2003). Owners could not easily replace highly skilled workers in strike situations, but the young women in the garment industry did not fit this description, and therefore were vulnerable when pursuing any sort of union activity (DeVault, 1998).

Labor unions provided an opportunity for women to have increased wages, improved working conditions and shorter hours, as well as educational and advancement opportunities (Henry, 1923). The women's union local was a way for women to meet their social and political needs, as well as their economic necessities (Ewen, 1994). Women received educational opportunities through union membership, in addition to opportunities for recreation and fellowship in the union sisterhood (Schneiderman, 1967). Unfortunately, in the majority of union activities, no one identified or advanced women's needs. When women did identify their needs, there was no persistence on the part of the male union members to advocate for them (DeVault, 1998).

The garment industry primarily consisted of Jewish owners and workers, creating a situation in which the bosses and the workers were of the same ethnic and cultural origin. Employment conflicts thus were within the same ethnic and cultural group (Ewen, 1994; Howe, 2002). This included potential for class conflict, between newly arrived immigrants (laborers) and immigrants of one or two generations (managers/owners), which contributed to the formation of unions (Diner, 2004). What came with the Russian Jewish immigration of the Progressive Era was the Jewish contribution to the American labor movement. The Jewish activists in this group brought vitality and courage to the American labor movement (Orleck, 2004; Sachar, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967; Stein, 2002).

The specifically ethnic union was the United Hebrew Trades established in 1888, and men were the primary members (Stein, 2002). The United Tailoresses' Society of New York was formed earlier in 1831, had female membership and represented several ethnic groups, who looked for fair treatment by employers (Foner, 1979, 1980, 1982; O'Sullivan & Gallick, 1975). Garment workers established the International Ladies Garment Workers Union [ILGWU] in 1900, and the members' connections with their Jewish history of political action and working class culture, quickly drove the union forward (Barrett, 1998; Ewen, 1994; Sanders, 1994; Stein, 2002; Zaretz, 1934). Young women

union activists forthrightly spoke and inspired others effectively (Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Orleck, 2004; Schneiderman, 1967).

Schneiderman's (1967) involvement in union activities began early in her career because of her choice to stay with the garment industry. By 1903, others introduced her to the possibility of joining a union, which she embraced. She went with a group of women to seek assistance from the men's trade union to organize (Schneiderman, 1967). For Schneiderman's (1967) first experience with organizing, she organized her own union local, which she and a small group accomplished quickly. Schneiderman (1967) established herself as a feminist leader, and members of the new union local elected Schneiderman secretary. Reflecting on this time, Schneiderman (1967) said: "it was the beginning of a period that molded all my subsequent life and opened wide many doors that might have remained closed to me" (p. 50). This immediately put Schneiderman in a position as a feminist leader to provide support, give advice, and troubleshoot employee-employer issues and concerns. Before long, she became involved in strike activities of other local unions, including the Strike of the Twenty Thousand.

Strike of the Twenty Thousand

The Strike of the Twenty Thousand, which took place on November 22, 1909, included Schneiderman (1967). This was essentially a women workers' strike, and it resulted in an "hours of work" reduction, to about 56 hours per week, and a 10% wage increase (Burt, 2004; Henry,

1923; Neidle, 1975; Newman, 2004; Sachar, 1992). Leaders of the American Jewish community pressured the owners to negotiate with the strikers and resolve the issues (Diner, 2004).

The Strike of the Twenty Thousand, and other strikes around this time, further empowered the labor unions and provided momentum to move forward (Ewen, 1994; Malkiel, 1990; Schneiderman, 1967; Wertheimer, 1977). The strike also inspired an initial redefining of the place and role of women in society, in terms of feminist sensitivities and political direction (Von Drehle, 2003). Young women, who were later victims of the Triangle Fire, also took part in the strike for safer working conditions and better hours and wages (Schneiderman, 1967; Zandy, 2004).

Schneiderman (1967) was on the front line for the Strike of the Twenty Thousand, along with her friend Clara Lemlich, whose *Yiddish spiel* inspired the crowd to strike (Orleck, 1995). Schneiderman was a member and a leader in the New York Women's Trade Union League, and was assisting the strikers in multiple ways, including food, expenses, moral support and leadership. Frances Perkins, a witness to the strike commented that it showed elements of an angry and powerful revolutionary movement (Downey, 2009). "The strikers were led by a tiny, fiery redhead named Rose Schneiderman, a Russian immigrant... unlike most strikes, however, this one caught people's attention"

(Downey, 2009, p. 35). This account offers evidence of the power and the effectiveness of Rose Schneiderman's feminist leadership abilities.

A news article dated December 18th, 1909, commented about the strikers.

Since the union movement began among women, nothing so significant as this general strike has happened, and for generalship, obedience and good conduct under circumstances which would break a less determined and courageous host, these Jewish, Italian and American girls from the East Side can give points to trades practicing striking...The girls are showing an unusual pluck and unity of spirit. It is a unique spectacle anywhere to see Jews, Italians and Americans working shoulder to shoulder for a common cause. The management at headquarters is excellent. (Leupp, 1909, p. 1)

This news reporter also gave an account of the cost, as the judicial authorities showed no concern for the rights of the demonstrators (Leupp, 1909).

Probably public sympathy has been more stirred by the unfair treatment of women pickets than the cause of the strikers could ever have aroused, so that the martyrdom of the girls who have been abused, thumped and thrown into the gutter has not been in vain. (Leupp, 1909, p. 4)

This was observation and commentary on the work that Schneiderman, Lemlich, and the others accomplished with the strike group. Leupp's (1909) observations revealed the strong, competent quality of feminist leadership and support the strikers were receiving. A forceful event in women's union organizing was the Triangle Factory Fire of 1911, a tragedy that created a turning point for advancement of women and social change.

The Triangle Factory Fire

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory fire on March 26, 1911 was the single most powerful event, which moved forward the union efforts and city ordinance enforcement (see Appendix C; Howe, 2004; Sachar, 1992; Schneiderman, 1967; Telushkin, 2002). Shortly after the managers distributed the pay envelopes to about 500 workers at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory on a Saturday afternoon, the fire started (Llewellyn, 1987). In eighteen minutes, 146 workers, most of them very young women, primarily Jewish, as well as Italian and Irish, died under horrific circumstances (Downey, 2009; Duchez, 1911; Foner, 1979; Howe, 2004; Llewellyn, 1987; Schneiderman, 1967; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993; Telushkin, 2002).

The managers routinely locked the workers inside, in order to prevent stealing or taking a break from work, and this day was no exception, so there was no evacuation route (Duchez, 1911; Kerber & De Hart, 2004; Telushkin, 2002). In the course of the tragedy, the fire escape collapsed, and the fire department ladders could not reach past the sixth floor, while the factory was located on the eighth, ninth and tenth floors of the Asch building, which some had described as “fire-proof” (Duchez, 1911; Foner, 1979; Henry, 1923; Llewellyn, 1987; Stein, 1962; Von Drehle, 2003). Everything in the factory was highly inflammable, except for the machines, the doors, the walls and the floors, and owners allowed workers to smoke (Burt, 2004; Duchez, 1911; Littlefield, 1996; Von

Drehle, 2003; Zandy, 2004). Fabric scraps and bolts of cloth filled the floor and all surfaces, which filled the very air with lint (Burt, 2004).

Workers either jumped to their deaths or burned alive in the disaster (Downey, 2009; Foner, 1982; Howe, 2004; Reef, 2000; Rischin, 1977; Stein, 2002; Takaki, 1993; Telushkin, 2002; Von Drehle, 2003).

[T]he union was determined to organize the workers at Triangle and continued to campaign for over a year until March 25, 1911. Then suddenly it was all over. At five o'clock on that Saturday afternoon, when the union shops were enjoying their newly won half-holiday, passersby in the neighborhood of Washington Square saw great clouds of black smoke coming from the building...It was the Triangle factory and before the fire was out, 143 girls and women had perished. Trapped behind locked doors—locked to protect them from the union organizers—many of them died in the flames. Others, in their effort to escape, clawed their way to windows, only to plunge to their death on the pavement below. But all were victims of wanton and criminal disregard of fire and health hazards. (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 98)

The young women's bodies landed in heaps on the pavement and water from the firefighters' hoses ran with their blood (Auch, 2002; Crewe & Schaefer, 2004; Shepherd, 1977; Stein, 1962).

Firefighter's attempts to catch the young women and men in the nets were futile, as the bodies came raining down, breaking through the nets, and in some cases even breaking into the glass structures set into the pavement over the building's cellar (Crewe & Schaefer, 2004; Hurwitz, 2002; Shepherd, 1977; Stein, 1962). Some estimated the force of the bodies coming down when striking the firefighters' nets to be 11,000 pounds (Stein, 1962). The sound of the bodies landing on the pavement left a powerful impression with witnesses, and greatly disturbed the

firefighters' horses (Auch, 2002; Shepherd, 1977; Stein, 1962). Others managed to escape through the roof exit, down the fire escape to the sixth floor, before the fire escape collapsed, or down the elevator (Auch, 2002; Crewe & Schaefer, 2004; Hurwitz, 2002).

Frances Perkins was at the Triangle Factory fire. She ran to the scene and recounted seeing people falling off the sides of the building as the fire raged and witnessed people jumping to their deaths (Downey, 2009). Horrified, Perkins watched people jumping with their clothes afire and realized the fire was keeping them from being able to leave the building safely (Downey, 2009). Perkins stood in the street by the building. “[She was] stunned, clutching her throat, as thousands of spectators crowded around, staring, standing in silence or crying or screaming” (Downey, 2009, p. 35).

Louis Duchez (1911), a news reporter, wrote:

Finding the doors locked to the stairways, the girls rushed to the windows. With their hair and clothes afire, they leaped from the eighth, ninth and tenth story windows... One man, excited and perhaps realizing that they would all be burned to a crisp if they remain in the building a few minutes longer, anyway, picked up six girls one after another, and threw them out of the window of the ninth story, after which he plunged to his death, also... Below the sight was sickening. Thousands of people had gathered and the firemen were doing their best to save as many lives as possible. Nets were spread... in an effort to catch some of the falling bodies. But the nets... broke under the weight of three or four bodies falling into them at the same time. (p. 667)

A *New York Times* article, dated 26 March 1911, reported similar facts such as the rapid movement of the fire, the large number of people trapped

inside the building and jumping to their deaths, and the availability of only one fire escape (Burt, 2004). The article also noted the building code laws were not enforced. A *New York World* article, dated 27 March 2011, reported interviewing two survivors, who told of locked doors and the horrific experience of the fire (Burt, 2004).

A *Forverts* Newspaper article dated March, 1911, *A Wild Inexplicable Mass Murder*, and re-published by the *Forward Newspaper*, March, 2011, reported:

Few fire escapes, locked doors, crooked and narrow stairways, a shop crammed with machines—signs of criminal negligence that robbed 144 workers of their young lives... There was no explanation for this. The doors were locked... Shop bosses denied the doors were locked. Here are statements several workers gave on the subject: Annie Alla of 437 East Twelfth Street said that the factory forelady protested several times to the bosses regarding their keeping the door next to the stairs on the eight floor locked. Frida Wilakowsky of 639 East 12th Street said that the door on the eight floor, through which you could access the stairs leading down to Washington Place, was always locked. Fanny Sintar, who recently returned to work at the factory, also confirmed that the doors were usually locked and opened only when workers arrived at work and when they left to go home. (pp. 1- 2)

A very poignant article, also from the *Forverts Newspaper*, *Our Ghastly Devastation* dated March, 1911, and re-published by the *Forward Newspaper*, March, 2011, reported:

The heart grieves, breath is held, eyes cry bloody tears. The disaster is too great, too dreadful, to be able to express one's feelings. A mountain of people, of children burned to death! Young children, blood and milk, full of life's force, lying in a pile of human burnt-offering! Children wept over by their parents, children—their crowning glory—their pride—their hope—the comfort of mothers and fathers, were in one minute taken from this world, drawing their last breath in a sea of flames.

Like birds, so many of these young children took off skyward, in twosomes and threesomes they held each other, and leaped away from the flame-filled hell. And that's how we perceive them yet. In flight they were still alive but one second later and their young bodies smash on the street's concrete surface and they are no longer! Their young lives are extinguished! (p. 1)

Aftermath of the Triangle Factory Fire

The Women's Trade Union League was deeply involved in addressing the tragedy (Duchez, 1911). Schneiderman (1967) was the secretary of the league and played a prominent role. "The Women's Trade Union League planned for a parade and the burial of the unidentified victims on Monday, the second day after the fire. But the city officials refused to turn over the bodies and forbade the parade" (Duchez, 1911, p. 669). The League persisted and eleven days after the fire, the city handed over the bodies.

Regardless of a steady rain all day the largest working class crowd that has ever turned out in New York City followed the eight coffins to the cemetery and carried banners in memory of the 145 martyrs of 'peaceful industry.' It was estimated that between 150,000 and 200,000 workers were in line, that about 300,000 mourners lined the sidewalks, and that a million wage slaves did not work during the day because of the funeral. (Duchez, 1911, p. 669)

Schneiderman (1967) referred to this event.

The League and Local 25 of the ILGWU got permission from the city to hold a funeral for those who could not be claimed by anyone. More than 120,000 of us were in the funeral procession that miserable rainy April day. From ten in the morning until four in the afternoon we of the Women's Trade Union League marched in the procession with other trade-union men and women, all of us filled with anguish and regret that we had never been able to organize the Triangle workers. (p. 98)

In a joint action, the League instigated a mass rally at the Metropolitan Opera House.

Through the generosity of Anne Morgan the meeting was held at the Metropolitan Opera House. There was not an empty seat by the time it began. Jacob Schiff, the well-known financier and philanthropist, was chairman. Among the speakers were imminent civic leaders, churchmen, lawyers, labor union officials, and representatives of women's organizations. (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 99)

The *Forverts Newspaper*, dated April, 1911, and re-published by the *Forward Newspaper* March, 2011, described the same meeting at the Met, beginning with the title.

Metropolitan Opera House Packed With Protest Meeting About the Fire: *Jacob Schiff and Other Wealthy Individuals Speak—a Few Sharp Comments by a Representative of the Women's Trade Union League.*

The “representative” making “a few sharp comments” was, of course, Rose Schneiderman (*Forward*, 2011). The article quoted Schneiderman.

I would be a traitor to the burned corpses...if I were to speak here of *philanthropy* and good *fellowship*. Many times we have tried you, kind sirs, time and again, and you have done nothing for us. And now we are tormented and warped as though by the Inquisition. This is not the first time young women have been burned alive in this city. Every week, I hear of the untimely death of yet another of my worker-sisters. Every year, thousands of us are disabled. The lives of men and women workers are so worthless and property so sacred. There are so many of us for each job, what difference does it make if 143 of us are burned?

We have tried you before, wealthy citizens, and now again. You will give us a few dollars for the mothers, brothers, and sisters of the unfortunates. For you, it's charity. But each time workers step out and fight against conditions they can no longer accept, you permit the iron hand of the law to asphyxiate it. The iron hand of the law chases us back to working conditions that make life unbearable.

I can't speak to you of a *fraternity of labor*. Far too much blood has been spilled. From personal experience, I know that the workers themselves, and only they, can help themselves. The only way in which they can save themselves is with a powerful movement of the working class.

This speech received much applause from those gathered in the galleries. (*Forward*, 2011, March 15, p. 2)

Because of Schneiderman's speech, and the work of the Women's Trade Union League, the governor launched a New York State investigation. Frances Perkins was one of the investigators. Because of some previous building inspections over time, there had been concerns regarding the potential for fire at the Triangle factory, including previous occurrences of small fires (Stein, 1962). Some interpreted this as a foreshadowing or portent of things to come, but this only became clear in hindsight (Stein, 1962). Unfortunately, the safety codes were lax, and the Triangle factory more than met them in an inspection completed prior to the fire (Stein, 1962; Zandy, 2004).

The grief and horror over this event brought about fundamental changes in New York City fire, building and construction codes, schedules for building and factory inspections, worker's compensation and unionizing (Auch, 2002; Crewe & Schaefer, 2004; Hurwitz, 2002; Neidle, 1975; Rischin, 1977; Schneiderman, 1967; Stein, 2002; Telushkin, 2002; Von Drehle, 2003). The result was the Industrial Code of New York State, designed to protect workers "against fire hazards ... hours of work and general working conditions" (Schneiderman, 1967, p. 102). Schneiderman

(1967) noted the code was “a living monument to those 143 women” who died in the Triangle Fire (p. 103).

The Women’s Trade Union League and the ILGWU worked with the Red Cross in establishing a relief committee to assist the families of the dead girls and to provide for funeral arrangements for those who could not be identified (Neidle, 1975; Schneiderman, 1967; Zandy, 2004). The labor unions assumed responsibility for memorializing the victims of the Triangle Fire disaster, and the event over time has become a class issue, removed from ethnicity (Hurwitz, 2002; Hyman, 2000). In the Triangle Factory Fire, the women paid the highest price in terms of numbers lost, as 126 of the 146 victims were Jewish or Italian women, at an average age of 19 (Hyman, 2000; Telushkin, 2002; Zandy, 2004). The social agencies discovered, in the aftermath of the fire, many of the young Jewish women who lost their lives were the sole support of their families (Glenn, 2002; Swanson, 2011). In fact, many of these women brought their paychecks home to their parents unopened, which the parents then distributed for the use of the family’s needs (Glenn, 2002).

To the outrage of many, the court acquitted the owners, Harris and Blank, of any legal charges in the subsequent trial (Burt, 2004; Crewe & Schaefer, 2004; Duchez, 1911; Foner, 1982; Russell, 1912; Stein, 1962; Zandy, 2004). Pauline Newman (2004) wondered how anyone could defend them (Newman, 2004). Diner (2000) described the factory as the “site of industrial exploitation and Lower East Side martyrdom” (p. 44).

The tragedy focused the community to demand reform and reform they did. For many years after this event the Jewish feminist leaders, like Schneiderman, Cohn, Lemlich, and Newman were at the forefront of progress in labor legislation and regulations, and industrial working conditions, which called forth their feminist leadership and social activism. Schneiderman (1967) kept her commitment to the memory of those women of the Triangle Fire tragedy.

Summary

The effective use of leadership inspired by moral power involved substantial leadership talents, skills, and abilities. The Jewish immigrant community had capable and powerful women leaders, some more publicly prominent than others. These women leaders had experienced the challenges and unpredictability of minority status and identity as immigrants and as Jewish women. Their heritage predicted and fomented life experiences, which were authentic, active, and complicated.

Jewish women, genuine, vibrant, and complex in their identities as mothers and workers, transformed traditional roles and expectations and moved forward, as the pertinent political and economic social constructs influenced their identities and behaviors. Jewish immigrant women found they could fulfill essential traditional roles, while at the same time meeting practical necessities associated with adaptation and assimilation to their new American environment and culture. Their involvement in benevolent organizations, and the Labor Union Movement in particular, provided

many opportunities for them to develop and excel in feminist leadership roles in their community.

The Triangle Fire tragedy contributed to substantial improvements in working conditions for both women and men. Much of the policies and laws that followed were due to the power and effectiveness of the feminist leadership abilities of women union activists. Certainly, no good outcome could justify the socially unjust, and ultimately lethal, actions of the company bosses of the Triangle Shirt Waist Factory.

Still, the Women's Trade Union League, inspired by the Triangle Fire tragedy, accomplished great good in terms of improving working conditions for all in the state of New York. The *Forward Newspaper*, the *Forverts* at the time of the Triangle Fire, has continued to commemorate and memorialize the Triangle Fire event of March 25th 1911 and its victims annually, as most recently there was recognition of the 100th anniversary of the tragedy in March 2011 (Swanson, 2011). As part of the 100th anniversary commemoration process, the *Forward* translated from the *Yiddish* and reproduced many of the original articles reporting on the tragedy "A Guide to the *Forverts* Archival Coverage of the Triangle Fire," (2011).

Jewish feminist leaders of the time took advantage of every opportunity to improve their lot and that of those around them, as some of them moved to national and even international prominence. Social activism in some form or other was always present in their consciousness,

in their priorities. The lessons of the Lower East Side were the inspiration for these women's accomplishments, and their abilities associated with resiliency, power and leadership carried them forward in their roles as feminist leaders and social activists.

CHAPTER SEVEN SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

Summary of Methods, Purpose, and Findings

I began this research project describing methods, priorities, and sources, from which I constructed my dissertation. In the research process, I employed inductive processes and was vigilant regarding my own bias. I allowed the research findings to inform my research process and analysis inductively in order to attain the most reliable outcomes from the process. My primary sources came through the women's documented voices and recorded lived experiences, including autobiographical sources and written document translations. I combined these with secondary sources to produce an historical feminist ethnography of the Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era. I organized my findings into four general areas, beginning with a description of the prominent historical events of the Progressive Era followed by three prominent themes involving Jewish women leaders, including resiliency, power, and leadership.

I first described prominent historical events of the Progressive Era, such as pogroms in Russia and Poland, labor strikes, the Panic of 1893, the Dreyfus Affair, World War I, the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Flu Pandemic of 1918, and Women's Suffrage. All had impact on the American Jewish community and the women of this community. At the same time, the women's daily routine had to have as little disruption as possible. Their very existence and the existence of their families,

economically and personally, depended on their labor and their abilities to manage the needs of their families and community. The women of the Jewish community were solution-oriented, community directed, and purpose driven, and what mattered most to them about these events was how to survive, to be well, and to prosper out of them.

I addressed how Jewish women of this era were able to deal with their living and working conditions and move forward, as they exhibited resiliency, by continuing to perform in their jobs, along with their social activism commitment and union involvement. Their quality of resiliency was associated with ethnicity, immigrant class and culture, and skills, along with their character assets, experiences, and ability to adapt. The cohesiveness and interdependence of the women contributed to their progress, and through survival, resiliency, and choosing life, the women internalized a habit of courage. Their habit of courage lifted their voices and propelled them forward in their daily lives, filled with resiliency and empowerment.

I described how power and opportunities for empowerment affected these Jewish immigrant women, as power represented real choices about how they lived their lives, cared for their families, and involved themselves in their community. I constructed the term “power motivators,” based on my study of the women’s lived experiences, which propelled them to take action and to make changes in their lives and the lives of others. A motivator might be considered a factor calling them to

action or a consequence of their actions. The challenging social conditions and the construction of women's reality by people in different communities and roles served as power motivators in their lives.

Power motivators contributed substantially to the success of the Labor Union Movement and labor law initiation and progress for improvement, as women exercised moral power in their commitment to social justice, and to the welfare of their community. Women accomplished all of this, as they encountered the power of the social constructions. The social constructions/conditions women encountered profoundly affected the quality of their lives and inspired them to take action. Women took advantage of their personal freedom, independence, education, and *mazel* (luck), and they exercised their moral power to improve their lives and the lives of those around them, shaping the life of their community for future generations.

I focused on leadership, and the Jewish immigrant community had capable and powerful women leaders, some more publicly prominent than others. Jewish women, authentic, vibrant, and complex in their identities as mothers and workers, transformed traditional roles and expectations and moved forward, as the pertinent political and economic social constructs influenced their identities and behaviors. The Jewish immigrant women found they could fulfill essential traditional roles, while meeting practical necessities associated with adaptation and assimilation to their new American environment and culture. The lessons of the Lower East Side

were the inspiration for these women's accomplishments, and their involvement in social activism, and the Labor Union Movement in particular, provided many opportunities for them to develop and excel in feminist leadership roles in their community.

Finally, from my research I induced Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era had a sense of self, a sense of survival, and a sense of resilience. They understood their calling and their purpose to preserve their families, their community, and their nation. These women embraced their traditional roles and responsibilities, while they took upon themselves the task of successful assimilation into the American culture, the American way of life. They employed a "both/and" model of being, which informed their progress and stabilized their development and expansion into an alien world of unprecedented freedom. The freedom from persecution, the freedom to have choices about many things, the freedom of America was unprecedented for the Jewish community. The women's ability to multitask the elements of their lives made it possible for them to preserve their culture and assimilate into the American culture simultaneously.

The women multi-tasked their way to prominent dual roles, successfully combining traditional roles and responsibilities with modern feminist leadership identities in their community and advocacy for social needs and social justice. The women had the courage to stand and to draw on their character assets of resiliency, power, and leadership, which

carried them successfully through a time of profound social construction challenges and rapid transformational change. I have had the opportunity of documenting here in this dissertation evidence of their endurance and courage, character assets, skills and abilities, and most of all their integrity and moral power. I have had the privilege of studying the women's lessons and the wisdom they bring, along with their experiences, for the benefit of my own future challenges and endeavors.

My findings may serve to inform individuals and other immigrant groups about the possibilities and potentials existing within each woman, as well as the power of collaboration in social change. My analysis, hopefully, may inspire others to develop their own impetus to be both present in the culture and still distinct. The generalization and extrapolation of my findings can change experiences of others in substantial ways and move them to positive action in choosing their way of life.

Women today encounter many challenges in attempting, and in many ways succeeding, to support and promote their families, and most especially their children. In the process, they must attend to a multitude of tasks, concerns, and possibilities, caught somewhere between the grounding discipline and the tiny tyranny of their day-to-day routines. They do all of this, as they focus on their *tachlis*—their purpose—while they hope, dream and plan for the future. In this dissertation my motive, passion, and intention was to examine the past for the sake of the future.

The implications for women in any community, based on the historical and feminist research findings and feminist theory analysis of this study, are that it is possible to assimilate into the American culture effectively, while preserving the ethnic culture of their origin. It is also possible for them to improve the social conditions of their immigrant group or a community in the freedom and opportunities of the American way of life. In the Jewish community, the spiritual and practical descendents of the resilient and powerful Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era continue to change their world today. They continue in the path established by their ancestors, holding on to traditions, values, and expectations, including performance goals and demands, while pursuing educational opportunities. The traditions and values are those of an ethnic and cultural minority, whose female members have succeeded in the “both/and” model of maintaining their culture of origin while surviving, living, and prospering in the *Goldena Medina* of American freedom and opportunity.

Middle class occupations for generations had prepared them to establish themselves relatively quickly in America’s middle class of business owners and members of professional disciplines (Howe, 2004). The group has over time and generations, successfully managed, perhaps due to their ability to tolerate ambiguities. The Jewish immigrant women’s “both/and” model, honed under this duress, plays out in community life today. The women attend to social justice values of the

Progressive Era today in the larger community. They rely on the benefit of affluent results of generational skills, education, and work ethic to provide more time to invest in these activities.

Shapiro (2005), in his astute volume on Jewish identity, commented:

The economic status of America's Jews presents a challenge to those Jews for whom Jewish identity involves an identification with the oppressed. Jews, either individually or collectively, are certainly not oppressed in the United States, and in fact, they are among America's most affluent groups. Elements within American Jewry however are eager to maintain ties to the political Left, and this requires that they ignore the realities of American Jewish affluence in order to promulgate a Jewish identity redolent of East Europe in the early twentieth century. (p. 115)

Gordon added:

The Jews had come to America... with the middle class values of thrift, sobriety, ambition, desire for education, and the delay of immediate gratification for the sake of long range goals. These cultural values, he claimed, accounted for their rapid rise in occupational status and economic affluence. (as cited by Takaki, 1993, p. 286)

This confluence or convergence of values, which is also evidence of values, is also likely the reason that Milton Himmelfarb's comment has become the common expression in this variation, which bears a lot of truth: "The Jews—they live like Episcopalians and vote like Puerto Ricans" (Horovitz, 2011a). Evidence of the community's values is in the successful combination of values of social justice with conditions of affluence, i.e. the more the community makes, the more it can give away in charitable endeavors of *tzedaka*. Shapiro's (2005) comment also illustrates and confirms the power and the influence of those Jewish

immigrant women of the “early twentieth century” in the community’s desire to hold on to aspects of their identity, characteristics, and values still today (p. 115)!

Jewish women today, as in the Progressive Era, know how to accomplish their purposes. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords is the daughter of a Jewish father and Gentile mother. Congresswoman Giffords commented that it was her Jewish female relatives, women of action, who would know how to do things, and who could get things done (Horovitz, 2011b).

Even with this competence still to this day, this ethnic group takes nothing for granted as the world changes. Their history is ever present in their minds and memories to remind them of the possibilities. In this Jewish immigrant generation in America, the mothers have set the example for the future of those that follow, on how to survive, manage their lives, and protect their children. The mothers have set the example on how to be a person, move forward, and contribute to a better world on every level, regardless of the challenges. Their history and success serves as an important lesson to future generations.

In addition to their accomplishments as mothers and the wisdom gained from this role, there were the feminist values and actions, emphasizing the importance and value of sisterhood.

It would be ever so much better for the world, and for the world’s workers of every degree, if the different women knew each other better...” from the Boston Herald on July 17, 1888 (and reprinted

in the *Boot and Shoe Recorder* on August 8, 1888). (Blewett, 1991, p. 167)

The legacy of nineteenth century women shoeworkers includes a warning to contemporary women workers: balancing the complex interests of gender and class requires a cautious approach to male-controlled organizations or cross-class coalitions with middle class women. The positive core of that legacy emphasizes the importance of collective action, the potential in sisterhood, the need for autonomy and power for women within the labor movement, and the urgency of political action to redefine women's place in society. It is eloquently expressed in the words of a Lynn striker in 1871:

We will not submit to being crowded; we will not be enslaved. We are freeborn American women: and when they attempt to tell us what they will do, we will rise in our might, and... [our] voices will tell them what we will do. (Blewett, 1991, p. 216)

The recognition of feminist leaders was also evident in the findings, and Rabbi Wise's comment in the eulogy for Bell Moskowitz on 4 January 1933 could easily apply to any number of dedicated feminist leaders.

Let it not be imagined that she was an ambitious woman, that hers was the ambition to lead. It was the will to serve and not the desire to lead that ruled her life. (Perry 1992, p. ix)

The overwhelming sense of service and humility above any other considerations for Jewish women leaders, both the famous ones and the nameless ones was impressive.

[S]he had no dreams of being praised above other women, feeling that there was always something better which she might have done if she had only been better and known better. Her full nature spent itself in deeds which left no great name on earth, but the effect of her being on those around her was incalculable, for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts and on all of those (women) who live faithfully their hidden lives and rest in unvisited tombs. (Davies, 1994).

Borrowing from an American West metaphor, those of us who are born to serve will be in the saddle until the day we die. The gift, privilege, and duty of service is a driving force in the lives of those who experience it.

Schneiderman (1967) was an example of this commitment to service. Employing a practical response to evident needs, Schneiderman as president succeeded in putting herself out of a job by actually accomplishing the existent purpose of non-government agency. In her own words:

The National Women's Trade Union League had decided that unions were doing so well they could look after themselves, organizing and getting legislation passed, so after two days of agonizing discussion, the National's executive board and representatives from the various leagues decided to shut up shop. (p. 246)

Schneiderman's (1967) career with the unions consisted of doing the job informally, and finally formally, of the agency she ended up heading as president. She, along with her colleagues Newman, Cohn and Lemlich, collaborated with, mentored, and supported others, in the finest feminist leadership tradition, so that many could then function effectively and independently (Orleck, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967). The fruits of Schneiderman's labor put her out of a job legitimately, and she possessed the courage and integrity to remove herself as president and disband the agency appropriately.

Cohen (1995) and Spewack (1995) in provided accounts of their many employment situations, characteristic of the garment industry and the times, as well as their many moves and changes in residence all within

the confines of the Lower East Side. These were some of the constant social conditions of their young lives, until as adults they moved on to much improved living conditions. These experiences provided lessons in flexibility and diversity, tolerance for change, and development of resilience.

Their mothers also role modeled how to take action, in the changes they instigated for improved circumstances and their motives and intentions for doing so. For example, the re-locations initiated by the mothers of Cohen, Schneiderman, and Spewack were moves, intended to improve, even incrementally, the daily circumstances of their lives (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

Part of the survival strategy for all three women's families were taking in boarders (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995). This meant the family lacked basic privacy, something that was entirely distressing to Spewack (1995). At the same time, these experiences afforded these young girls the opportunity to become well acquainted with other people in the community, and learn much from the inevitable observations and interactions.

Spewack (1995) spent her time in books. She learned about the various personalities and character of her friends and associates in the Lower East Side neighborhoods. This served Spewack (1995) very well in her adult life later, when she developed into a world-renowned playwright.

Cohen (1995) suffered from chronic ill health and consequently had episodic stays in the local hospital. This gave her the opportunity to learn the ways of other cultures and ethnic groups and time and opportunity to build her reading and learning skills in English. These were all examples of the women's ability in this immigrant group turning challenging circumstances to a positive purpose, an outcome that was characteristic for them (Cohen, 1995; Schneiderman, 1967; Spewack, 1995).

Discussion

Sources for my research provided me with many examples of strength, courage, wisdom, and endurance, and certainly of resiliency, power, and leadership in the lives of these Jewish women. Many times solutions, which women implemented in dealing with their social challenges, were practical and effective. Women carefully weighed and deliberated options and actions.

The lessons I contemplated provided me the opportunity to hear the immigrant Jewish women's voices of wisdom and experience. There were the examples of a strong work ethic, and the right use of the will, by making ethical choices, which were productive and helpful, rather than self-defeating. There was the evidence of the impact, significance, and importance of these lessons in their lives, as well as for the lives of women in the present and in the future. Nadell (2003) spoke to the Jewish women's work ethic, which she said was an "internalized ... culturally

derived, gendered work ethic of doing what need(s) to be done” (p. 289). This quality represented the will to action of the Jewish immigrant women. This was the practical, effective response to the living and working conditions, which had many opportunities for improvement, and it was clearly effective.

Takaki (1993) highlighted sociologists’ observations that “Jewish socioeconomic mobility was the result of a Jewish work ethic” (p. 287). A timeless comment pulled from the experience of a Jewish woman working in the era of the American Civil Rights movement applied here as well. “The primary lesson I learned is that ordinary people can do the most extraordinary things” (Nadell, 2003, p. 294). There was also a historical record of Jewish women in the American Civil Rights movement, “who moved out of a relatively comfortable existence into an unfamiliar and often dangerous context in order to take action on principles in which they believed” (Nadell, 2003, p. 294). Each represent the quality of character and the force and power of will which propelled immigrant Jewish women forward to improve their living and working conditions and to help and support their families.

The words and the deeds of the Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era stand on their own merits. My commitment to giving voice to these women through this dissertation study process, to have them speak directly as much as possible, evolved into the provision of a large

number of quotes in the text, either from the women themselves or from others speaking or writing about them.

Researchers have encapsulated this time in history, the Progressive Era, with detail and specificity about these women. The largest influx of immigrants ever in the history of the U.S. occurred in this era, with most of the Jewish immigrants concentrated in the Lower East Side of New York. This fact demonstrated to me the importance of these women and their experiences to inductively inform and instruct, as the social challenges of such a population concentration were formidable. These women coped with a population concentration that was oppressively dense, and the living and working conditions were primitive. The volume of immigration arose directly from the persecutions and exceeding difficulties of daily life for the Jewish populations of Eastern Europe and Russia. These populations took risks to leave the known for the unknown and were better off for it.

The women played a substantial part in the adaptation of the Jewish community to this new environment. The women came with the men, with the intention of making a life in the new world, as they understood there was no going back to their countries of origin, there was no place for them there. The women, through their skills, wisdom, will power, and feminist traits were instrumental in creating functioning homes, families, culture, and identity for this immigrant group.

The exceptionalism of the Jewish immigrant group was identifiable in the characteristics or character assets of the women. In the course of my study, certain characteristics of the women emerged and became sources for the themes of my dissertation study. Primarily, these themes were resiliency, power, and leadership. Other attributing themes included courage, integrity, moral power, cultural entrepreneurship, identity, social conditions and actions, social constructions, and social justice.

My research process described, explained, and expounded on the characteristics, qualities, and character traits of this female immigrant group. These women found ways to personify power through their values and strength of character, which inspired their words and actions. These characteristics, qualities, and character traits enabled and empowered the women, who fully and successfully fulfilled their role in the immigrant experience of this group.

Jewish immigrant women changed their world. In my opinion and based on observations, one's tolerance of ambiguity increases in association with consciously dialectical experiences. Jewish women leaders had much opportunity for encountering dialectical experiences during their adjustments to the new world. They made choices based on their values as they measured these against tradition and practicality. They examined their lives and circumstances, questioned everything, and made appropriate choices regarding how to preserve their faith and traditions and still make progress in difficult conditions. Flexibility was

an essential component of their success in following the “both/and” model, allowing them to preserve their heritage, while successfully adapting to a new environment.

The intention of my research and dissertation was to give the Jewish immigrant women the opportunity to “play a starring role rather than a walk-on part” in the history, they lived during the Progressive Era (Witt, 2007, p. 11). I also wanted to give them voice. I designed this dissertation about women of the past to create an accurate historical narrative of their struggle and to educate, inform, and serve women of the present and the future. Finally, these themes and findings are congruent with my concepts of feminist leadership; Jewish immigrant women and identity; sensitivity to and valuation of social justice, and the impact of social constructions on their lives. The Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era were masters of wisdom and knowledge.

Implications

The implications for theory, research and practice can focus on delving more deeply into the lessons and successes attained by this female immigrant group, and how this can be communicated and implemented to aid other immigrant groups. Further research might involve more investigation of the historical record, with deeper focus on feminist issues, philosophy, and ideology, and study of other female immigrant groups. I associate practice with lived experience and the importance for all of us to

carry our knowledge gains with us and share them whenever timely and appropriate.

Focus on Implications

The themes of this dissertation, and the evidence I have presented for consideration and review associated with them, indicate there is much, which the reader can glean from the voices and the lived experiences of these Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era. The lessons I have described, extrapolated and contained here are for women today and tomorrow. All of this together, the voices of the Jewish immigrant women and the lessons they alone hold and share, can and do provide great benefit to children of the Jewish community, the children of other ethnic communities, and to future generations of any community.

In the research process of this dissertation, I learned about the power of feminist-centered Jewish women, and their relentless determination, creativity, and strength of will. I saw that these character assets made it possible for them to survive, make progress, and move forward. Because of these qualities, they were able to make a difference in their lives, and the lives of their children and families, their community, and the larger world.

Future Research Opportunities

There is any number of possibilities for future research related to this study. One might be an historical research study of the men in this immigrant group. This would involve looking at comparison points

between the men's experiences of adjustment and assimilation compared to the women in the group. A qualitative research study based on interviews with the female descendents of the immigrant women is another possibility. This would involve gathering their recollections of conversations with older relatives, and analyzing the interview content associated with the themes identified in this dissertation process of resiliency, power, and leadership. Looking at the current complexities of the descendents of this immigrant group, and how the "both/ and" model plays out between their affluence and their social justice commitments could be most informative for the Jewish community, as well as the community at large.

A research idea involving interviews would be to look at the impact of power motivators in the lives of the descendents of the Jewish Russian immigrant group. The research would involve examining how this translates in the lived experiences of the women today. There is also the possibility of a qualitative research study focused on another ethnic minority immigrant group with a strong tribal culture, and looking inductively at the women of the group in the feminist theory context. A qualitative research study focused on several different ethnic immigrant groups, comparing findings about the women thematically for informative data and multiple views would be another possibility.

Another possibility could involve interviews of a select group of Jewish women leaders regarding values, priorities, identity, and direction,

and could examine how they manifest the “both/and” model in their lives. There could be an opportunity for deeper immersion experience for a researcher over time, through the development of essays. This would provide the researcher with opportunities to explore the Progressive Era primary and secondary sources, thereby uncovering additional mega-structure and meta-analysis opportunities in this immigrant ethnic minority. Finally another option could be the possibility of a feminist theory-based project, either a quantitative or qualitative study, in which the researcher developed a questionnaire for a select group of mixed ethnic women, based on the thematic findings of this dissertation, for further revelations regarding women’s resiliency, power and leadership.

Research suggestions above are only a few of the possible options. The opportunities for research of immigration, ethnicity, and gender issues are virtually limitless. My dissertation represents a small portion of the field, but still a pertinent and valuable one. I hope that researchers in the future will do more to inform and develop strategies, which will be supportive, positive, and helpful to immigrant groups in the future and the women in these immigrant groups specifically.

Conclusions

At the outset, I sought to explore many research sources, in order to discover both congruencies and contradictions regarding the lived experiences of the Jewish immigrant women of the Progressive Era. A particular area of interest for me was identification of the qualities and

characteristics displayed by this minority female immigrant group, the ways and means by which they navigated their adjustment to their new life in America. I assumed a mega-structure focus on the source data and subjected the research findings to a sort of meta-analysis process, a global view, focused on perspectives, purposes, and outcomes.

We, as women of the 21st century, are most fortunate to have access to such historical records, along with the insight, wisdom, and lived experiences they contain. These are the voices of the women. In a vow not only for matrimony, but for sisterhood as well—For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health—in the most solemn vows of their lived lives, they speak to us. Death does not part them from us. Their voices are with us, and when we commit their stories to our memory, they live in us. I am highly privileged to bear witness to their being and history. May I do it justice.

In my recitation of the Jewish immigrant women's realizations, accomplishments, and wisdom, in honoring them here, my description of their process has evolved into a repetitive lyrical cadence. I have chosen to represent their accomplishments in the cadence of a sacred song, like an ancient chant, as I bring their lessons into the present, in order to inform the future.

They teach us that being persistent, effective, adaptable, determined, courageous and relentless matters. They teach us that power motivators are effective movers of people in particular ways, that

sisterhood is an invaluable component of authentic relationships, woman to woman, and that respect, integrity, and moral power are priceless.

They teach us that feminist traits and values serve women and those they care for very well, and that collaboration, mentoring, support, caring, and compassion are essential qualities to possess and to share. They teach us that cultural entrepreneurs can change the world, through thoughtful planning, wisdom, and action. They teach us that identity is crucial to accomplishing anything, as the self-identity connects intricately with self-respect and self-esteem, as well as ethnic essence and ethnic resiliency.

They teach us that assimilation into a new culture is possible, without giving up the old one, with the understanding, and implementation of the “both/and” model. They teach us that social conditions do not have the power to hold anyone back, that living and working conditions can change, that social justice is attainable, and that unions matter. They teach us that gender issues are front and center in women’s lives, and understanding them and working to improve them enhances the lives and experiences of women. They teach us that language barriers are a fact of life for immigrants to a new country, and that with time, persistence, and diligence, they are overcome. They teach us that actions speak louder than words, and that excelling at work and school pays big rewards, and enables immigrants to change their world in the atmosphere of the American culture’s freedom and independence.

They teach us that education matters above almost everything else for an immigrant population, and whether it is formal or informal, immigrant populations do need to get as much as possible as fast as possible, and make it work. They teach us that some things are above us and beyond us, and one of those is mazel—luck—and it is up to us to help luck along as much as possible, by our thoughtful planning and our choices. They teach us that lessons learned are invaluable, those being the importance of passion for a work ethic, wisdom, and will power, all of which must be developed and present in the individual person, in order to move forward effectively and successfully. They teach us that obstacles, such as illness, ignorance, or lack of resources can make us stronger, resilient, and more creative.

They teach us that dependence on social agencies may at times be essential for survival, but their assistance comes with a price, and the price can be self-respect, an essential ingredient for accomplishment and self-reliance. They teach us that anti-Semitism and religious conversion attempts do not go away, but we can confront them, deal with them, and move beyond them. They teach us that looking at our world through the lenses of mega-structure and meta-analysis can inform, educate, and enlighten our point of view, give context to our dialectic, and guide our direction forward.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Union Activists



Pauline Newman



Rose Schneiderman



Fannia Cohn



Clara Lemlich

APPENDIX B
Newsboys and Union Strikers



Newsboys

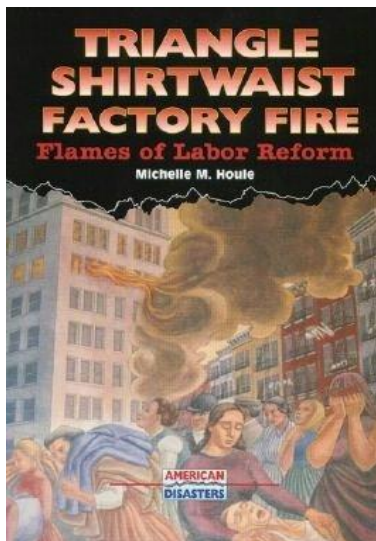


Garment Workers Striking



Strikers & Police

APPENDIX C Triangle Factory Fire



Triangle Factory Fire



**Triangle Factory
Fire Victims**

APPENDIX D Garment Industry Workers

