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Destabilizing Domesticity: The Construction and Collective Memory of Jewish-American Womanhood from 1900 to 1950

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Introduction

In 1902, after a month of direct action against kosher butchers and the high price of beef by Jewish women, Sarah Cohen, "a remarkably energetic woman," raised 75 dollars, rented an old furniture store, and opened a co-operative butcher shop. She went against the wishes of the mostly male Committee of Fifty who wanted to continue the protests only by printing circulars in protest of high prices. She hoped to continue opening stores and get to the point where there was enough demand that she could get a warrant for in-house kosher slaughtering.[1]

How does Sarah Cohen fit into our collective memory of Jewish-American women? The Jewish-American women of the first half of the twentieth century are remembered only as domestic, immigrant mothers. They are associated with the home, the Old-World, and the kitchen and often are seen as holding their families back from full American identity. However, in actuality, their histories and identities are far more complex. The women that I learned about as a child are not the ones that I found in the archives. Indeed, it is clear that there is no singular definition of Jewish-American womanhood, nor has there ever historically been so. Instead, Jewish women have held many roles and encompassed a wide range of identities during their time in the United States. Starting with the first Sephardic Jewish women to arrive in New York in 1654, including Jewish-American scholars like myself writing about the history of our forebears, and extending through the Jewish girls currently being born, Jewish-American womanhood has allowed for, and in fact been constructed by a range of factors and behaviors that go beyond stereotyped notions of gender and religion.[2]

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[1] "Big Crowds insist on New Meat Shops," *Evening World*, June 11, 1902.
[2] Hasia R. Diner and Beryl Lieff Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 3.

Jewish-American womanhood, like those who embody it, is dynamic and flexible. In the context of this project, womanhood refers to gendered identity and the variety of actions and attributes that go along with it. In particular, I focus on femininity and domesticity as key elements of womanhood, but they are by no means its entirety. There are certain gender norms associated with femininity and domesticity, but Jewish-American womanhood encompasses those women who conform to such norms and those do not.

A particularly important period in the construction of Jewish American womanhood is the large immigration and subsequent Americanization of primarily Eastern European Jewish people in the early twentieth century. From 1900 to 1950 the number of Jews in America increased substantially, leading to changing experiences of Jewish and American identities. Texts with food components, including cookbooks, newspaper articles about consumer protests, and children's historical fiction provide evidence of the construction of Jewish-American womanhood during this time and the ways that it is currently contained within Jewish historical memory. Cookbooks written by Jewish women for Jewish women illustrate the ways that Jewish womanhood was constructed within groups. Newspaper articles written by non-Jews about Jewish women provide evidence of external constructions and understandings of Jewish women. And children's books written by both Jewish and non-Jewish women demonstrate the ways that these constructions of womanhood are remembered or forgotten. All three source types provide different insights but are linked by their focus on Jewish women either as reader, subjects or both and their inclusion of food as an element of their text. Drawing on these texts, I seek to deconstruct the collective memory and popular opinion of Jewish-American women in the first part of the twentieth century, pushing past simplistic ideas of Jewish-American women as only domestic. I conclude that Jewish-American women between 1900 and 1950 had intersectional

identities informed by their gender, geographic origins, religious identity, and class status. They lived lives that contained a complexity of actions that could be both private and domestic and public and gender norm nonconforming as evidenced by consumer protests about the price of food. However, by placing female characters into a binary of public or private, Jewish-American children's historical fiction fails to encompass this complexity or accurately teach their stories to the next generation of Jewish-American women, a failure that perpetuates false narratives and leads to an incomplete knowledge of the past.

Scholarly Dialogues about Cookbooks, Consumer Protest and Children's Literature

There is a fair amount of scholarship on Jewish women's history and immigration and an increasing body on cookbooks and women's domestic activities more broadly during the first part of the twentieth century. However, there is little scholarship that combines these two subjects to specifically analyze Jewish women and cookbooks. Therefore, this project brings together the work of many different scholars to examine how Jewish-American women used cookbooks to construct their gendered identities. Previous research on Jewish women in the United States between 1900 and 1950 provides historical context for the times in which the cookbooks were written and the events that influenced dominant social values.[3] However, these texts do not necessarily include food or the importance of domesticity in their analysis of the women. Meanwhile, scholars who focus on cookbooks and food in the United States more heavily emphasize domesticity and the ways that cookbooks informed women's behaviors and

[3] Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her*; Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender and the Anxiety of Assimilation*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

constructions of femininity but leave out the experiences of Jewish women.[4] Many of their analyses focus on the ways that middle-class women's relationships to the kitchen changed with the loss of domestic servants and need to cook for their families, which cannot encompass the shifts that occurred for Jewish or other low-income women who already were cooking for their own, and often others', families. Thus, both sets of scholarship are necessary for crafting an understanding of Jewish-American womanhood through English-language cookbooks as neither covers it alone.

I build on existing scholarship on food protests more generally to conceptualize Jewish women's actions. Food protest theory can be divided into two schools of thought which appear to position the protests in two opposing categories. The first school looks at food protests as outside the sphere of traditional politics, tied to fulfilling immediate needs rather than creating large scale change, and accepting of the gendered divisions of society.[5] The work of these scholars provides a framework within which the Jewish women's actions can be conceptualized as an extension of domesticity. However, other scholars have recently interpreted such protests as deeply political and part of making large scale change, an interpretation that informs understandings of the protests as public action to create long-term, political change.[6] In this thesis, I refuse to accept this binary and illuminate the importance of both school's theories in

[4] Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking,* (Baltimore: John's Hopkins University Press, 2003); Megan J. Elias, *Food on the Page: Cookbooks and American Culture,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
[5] E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50, no. 1 (1971); Lynne Taylor, "Food Riots Revisited," *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 2 (Dec 1, 1996); Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918," *Signs* 7, no. 3 (Apr 1, 1982.
[6] Emily E. LB. Twarog, *Politics of the Pantry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005).

understanding the social and political actions of Jewish-American women, thus further illustrating the complexity of these women.

Scholarship on the Lower East Side origin myth and mother-daughter relationships in children's literature informs my understanding of the ways that Jewish-American children's books set forth a specific narrative of Jewish history and Jewish-American womanhood. Hasia Diner identified the Lower East Side origin myth as the somewhat fictionalized common origins story crafted by Jewish-Americans and wrote about it in the context of Jewish-American culture more broadly with a small section on children's literature. To be specific, the Lower East Side Origin Myth suggests that all Jewish-Americans immigrated from Eastern Europe and settled on the Lower East Side which was only home to Jewish people and a Jewish cultural epicenter before they all assimilated, entered the middle-class and left the Lower East Side behind.[7] This project expands upon her work and looks at how the myth continues to be perpetuated in children's books. Furthermore, scholars have looked at the ways that mother-daughter relationships in children's literature maintain stereotypical gender norms and create ties between "good mother" status and food or being in the kitchen. However, these analyses often include the idea that daughters become their mothers which is not possible in the case of the Jewish-American mother-daughter relationship, where the mothers are always presented as tied to the 'Old-World' and daughters as striving towards identification with the new. Therefore, this project expands these interpretations to include other female role models in addition to the mothers. This combination of historical analysis and literary criticism allows for an

[7] Hasia Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

understanding of the children's literature as both texts and tools of collective historical memory production.

Despite limits to the research presented in this study in terms of geographic region and exclusion of Holocaust studies, it still provides insights into Jewish-American womanhood in the first half of the twentieth century. Because New York was home to the highest concentration of Jewish people in America during the first half of the twentieth century, much of the media for and about Jews at that time came out of the city and thus the content discussed in this project is almost all centered around it.[8] That said, the conclusions drawn about Jewish-American womanhood can be understood at least to some extent to apply more nationally. For example, the cookbooks referenced here were published for a broader audience than just the women in New York City and the protests emphasized issues that affected the whole country. Additionally, this paper does not delve into the Holocaust or its effects on Jewish Americans. Though the time period scope of the project does extend through the Holocaust, I have chosen not to include Holocaust studies as an element of my scholarship. There is much to understand about Jewish-American womanhood between immigration and the Holocaust which could get overshadowed by the immense influence of such a terrible event were I to include it.

Chapter Descriptions

Chapter One looks at the ways English-language Jewish cookbooks written between 1900 and 1950 were used by Jewish women as manuals for proper Jewish-American womanhood. These texts, including books written by wealthy Jewish women for interclass cultural transmission, teaching cookbooks written by women running settlement houses, corporate

[8] Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, 15

cookbooks promoting certain foods to Jewish consumers, and cookbooks published by Jewish newspapers to encourage women to cook kosher foods, document the changing expectations placed on Jewish-American women over the course of these fifty years. Ultimately, the books assert that womanhood derives from a focus on domestic labor and that that labor should be used for the propagation of dominant societal values. In the beginning of the century, those values were centered on assimilation and pressured women to use food to make their families better Americans. However, in the 1930s and 1940s, as Jews became more assimilated and began to enter the middle class, the focus shifted to cultural maintenance and food as a means to keep Judaism alive in the United States. Furthermore, I conclude that the different authors and audiences of the books along with their shifting focuses demonstrate that Jewish women's identities and values were informed by intersections of gender, religion, class, and geographic origin.

Chapter Two uses newspaper articles about consumer protests led by Jewish women between 1900 and 1935 to further complicate notions of who Jewish-American women were and how they behaved. The protests all originated in New York City, though they often spread to other metropolitan areas with large Jewish populations such as Boston because the underlying issues such as beef trusts, pre-war tensions and the Depression affected women nationwide. When the prices of staples such as beef, onions, or potatoes became too high to handle, women took to the streets to enforce strict boycotts of the products. The women who protested were those who had become accustomed to a lifestyle that included meat and comfortable amounts of food daily, but not those who had enough money to be able to weather substantial increases in food prices. The protests illustrate an inability to characterize Jewish-American women's actions in a simple, singular manner. Both domestic and political in nature, the protests were domestic in

that they occurred over the price of food and the women constructed their protesting image around the need to feed their families. However, at the same time the women took to the streets and were unafraid to violently attack shopkeepers and consumers or negotiate with big business or government representatives, thus behaving publicly. Therefore, the protests cannot be understood as fitting into one definition or the other, instead one must hold the domestic and the public elements of these actions in tension to truly understand the actions of Jewish-American women.

Though the cookbooks and the newspaper articles set up an understanding of Jewish-American womanhood as changing and complex, chapter three demonstrates that Jewish-American children's literature written about the first half of the twentieth century and published in the second half presents a simplified version of the history containing a binary of female characters as either traditional and domestic or in the public sphere and defying gender norms. The history represented in these stories is one that is informed both by the time period in which the books are written with its contemporary feminist struggles to assert that women can exist outside the home and also the period between 1900 and 1950 in which they are set. Though not all of the books take place on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, they all fit into the basic structure of the Lower East Side origin myth. Along with perpetuating this myth, the books serve to educate Jewish (and non-Jewish) children about Jewish culture and religion. However, they fall short when teaching about Jewish-American women because of their female character binary. Half the female characters, usually the mother figures, are presented as deeply tied to Jewish tradition, highly domestic, and rarely in the public sphere. Food serves a symbol of their traditional domesticity as they are only in public when marketing and only cook traditional Jewish food such as rugelach instead of birthday cake. In contrast, the other half of the female

characters, usually the daughters and protagonists, are presented as American, or at least aspiring to be so, gender role non-conforming, and never domestic or in the kitchen. These characters rarely cook or shop, and when they do interact with food it is either to be embarrassed by traditional Jewish foods such as liver sandwiches or to cook more American-style recipes. This split precludes an understanding of Jewish women as able to be both domestic and public and thus leaves out a large amount of historical reality such as the narrative of the protesting women in chapter two.

Ultimately, it should be no surprise that Jewish-American women in the first half of the twentieth century are more complex than two sides of a binary split around domesticity. Jewish-American women today have ancestors from all over the world, live in a variety of locales in the United States, and engage in a range of activities. That said, there are still stereotypes and historical myths that remain and must be deconstructed. Food provides a lens for understanding Jewish-American womanhood because of the deep connections between the stereotypical Jewish mother and her need to overfeed those that she loves. Likewise, the foods that are understood as Jewish, such as latkes, knishes, or gefilte fish, continue to perpetuate the myth that all Jewish people came from Eastern Europe where such foods originate. However, by using food, not as the center of the paper, but as a way to access constructions of Jewish-American womanhood I seek to begin to dismantle these false notions. If we hope to raise Jewish daughters that will truly break down these stereotypes and myths, we must show them a wide range of histories. Cookbooks and newspaper articles provide evidence of the complexity of Jewish-American femininities, but the current state of Jewish-American children's literature remains stuck in antiquated notions that only serve to perpetuate these false universals rather than dismantle them.

Chapter One

Uptown Matrons, Downtown Daughters, and Suburban Moms: Constructing Jewish-American Womanhood through the Kitchen, 1900-1950

The Jewish woman who presides over her home, is entrusted with a great and noble responsibility. The Jewish fate, the Jewish present, and the Jewish future are in her keeping. – Miriam Isaacs [9]

Between the 1880s and the closing of immigration in 1924, around two and a half million Jewish people came to the United States, primarily from Eastern Europe.[10] These immigrants joined Central European Ashkenazi Jewish people who had come in the mid-nineteenth century and were on their way towards assimilation and acceptance by mainstream Americans. [11] Once in the United States the newer immigrants faced heavy pressures to assimilate and acculturate to the dominant American forms of life both from other Jews who wanted to maintain their social status and from xenophobic mainstream society. Simultaneously, the growth of the Reform movement in the late nineteenth century and subsequent shifts away from such practices as separation by gender during services and strict adherence to the laws of Kashrut changed the lived experience of Judaism, making it more similar to Christianity, the dominant form of American religion.[12] Then, over a few generations, families assimilated and

[9] Miriam Isaacs, *What Every Jewish Woman Should Know*, (New York: Jewish Book Club, 1941), 5.
[10] Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her,* 136.
[11] The Jewish people are divided into three main diasporic groups, the Ashkenazim, the Sephardim, and the Mizrahi. Ashkenazi Jews descend from those who settled in Central and Eastern Europe, Sephardic Jews come from the Iberian Peninsula, and Mizrahi Jews are of middle-eastern descent. There are Jews of all three groups who currently live in the United States. This project focuses specifically on the experiences of Ashkenazi Jews because they were the majority of the Jews that immigrated and acculturated during this time period. (Rachel M. Solomin, "Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews," *My Jewish Learning*, 2017 https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/sephardic-ashkenazic-mizrahi-jews-jewish-ethnic-diversity/)
[12] The laws of Kashrut, or kosher laws, are the dietary restrictions put forward in Leviticus that many Jewish people have followed throughout history. They include not eating shellfish or pork, and not eating meat and milk products

joined the middle class, which led to fears that their children were losing their Jewish identity. Therefore, during the 1940s and 1950s, the focus shifted from assimilation to the need to maintain cultural and religious practice. Religious education rose, as did participation in groups such as B'nai B'rith.[13] Each of these shifts affected the lives of all Jewish people in the United States, but can particularly be understood through the lives of women, who were seen as primarily responsible for their family's Jewishness and also for their assimilation, two concepts that existed in a tense equilibrium, a role that they frequently performed via the kitchen.

English language Jewish cookbooks published in the United States between 1900 and 1950 highlight these tremendous changes in both Jewish-American life and the life of women in the United States more broadly and the ways that Jewish women attempted to navigate them. Functioning as manuals for Jewish women across geographic and class spectrums, these books reveal how behavioral expectations changed dramatically over time and were influenced by both religious and mainstream societal gender norms. Though the religious norms frequently mirrored society's, cookbooks required women to walk a thin line between Jewish (or foreign) and American behavior. Often, not satisfying the requirements of either. In the early years of the twentieth century, wealthier, assimilated Jewish women used cookbooks as signposts for proper behavior, either focusing on internal class culture transmission or guiding poor, recently immigrated Jewish women towards Americanization. In the 1920s and 1930s, cookbooks became a way for professionals such as domestic scientists to entice Jewish women to eat certain diets or use certain products, both Jewish and not, thus beginning to complicate whether the

in the same meal. Furthermore, they extend into housekeeping as separate dishes are needed for meat meals and for milk meals.

[13] B'nai B'rith is a Jewish organization founded in the US devoted to philanthropy both here and abroad. Members participate in both social and philanthropic activities. (B'Nai Brith International)

focus of their domestic labor should be assimilation or cultural maintenance. Then, during the middle of the century, as Jews edged into the middle class and mainstream society experienced a shift towards domestic religion where the home was the center of religious activity, the idea of kitchen Judaism and the protection of Jewish values and community through the home became dominant via the publication of Jewish newspaper- and rabbi-supported kosher cookbooks. All of these cookbooks were written for Jewish female readers, yet not all of the readers were the same. All were Jewish, yet some were part of the Reform movement and others were recently immigrated adherents to orthodoxy. All were women, yet the wealthy women writing community cookbooks to share class culture had entirely different experiences than poor, recent immigrants being told how to be American, and neither group would have recognized the lives of the middle-class women cooking in the suburbs in the middle of the century. Though all of the books asserted that women's femininity derived from a focus on domestic labor in or out of their homes and expected that they would use food as a means for the maintenance of cultural values, Jewish women's ideas about womanhood and the values they adhered to were not necessarily the same.

Intersecting Identities and Experiences of Jewish-American Women

It is important to consider the intersectional experiences of Jewish women in the United States when seeking to understand the multiple ideas about womanhood expressed in these cookbooks. Jewish women's experiences and ideas are informed by more than just their gender or religion. Class, geographic location, and ethnic origin are also elements that informed the construction of Jewish-American women's gendered identities. Intersectionality, the theory that lived experiences are informed by the ways that identities and oppressions intersect and affect

each other, has traditionally been applied to the three categories of race, class and gender.[14] Yet, as made clear by the intersecting religion, class, ethnic and gender-based identities of the Jewish women in this study, the theory can and should be used to address more diverse forms of identity.

Many elements informed the intersectional identities of Jewish-American women and their experiences, including outside forces such as the mainstream dominant culture, in this case white middle-class Christianity. Scholars Jessamyn Neuhaus and Megan Elias have used cookbooks from this time period to show the ways that middle- and upper-class white women more broadly faced enormous changes in their experiences of domesticity and cooking due to loss of servants and changing gender norms across society.[15] These cookbooks used various trends and approaches such as domestic science, nutrition, food as a creative outlet, and the rise in convenience foods and quick-make recipes to attempt to entice these women into the kitchen, speaking to the high value placed on cooking and domesticity as elements of womanhood. However, these scholars fail to acknowledge that poorer white women, women of color, and recent immigrants such as the Jewish women coming from Europe never had servants and thus always cooked for their own, and often others', families or that cookbooks were written for women other than those in the white middle and upper class, thus ignoring, for example, the cookbooks for Jewish women that form the basis of this study. Despite this oversight, the changes these scholars have elucidated do form a part of the context in which Jewish women

[14] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991).
[15] Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking*; Elias, *Food on the Page*.

cooked and were part of the type of middle-class life and expectations that in many ways served as the end goal of assimilation.

Jewish women in America had to navigate not only the domestic trends and expectations of their white, middle-class, Christian counterparts, but also their own distinct history of immigration and Jewish cultural and religious norms of femininity. The majority of Jewish women in America in the first part of the twentieth century were Ashkenazi Jews either of Central or Eastern European descent. 200,000 German-Jewish people came to the United States between 1820 and 1880, and by the first decades of the twentieth century were comfortably nearing assimilation and the middle class.[16] In contrast, over 10 times that many Eastern European Jewish people migrated between the late 1880s and 1924. This wave of immigrants tended to settle in ethnic enclaves such as the Lower East Side of New York City and at least for the first quarter of the twentieth century was significantly less assimilated than their German counterparts.[17] Differences in geographic origin and amount of time in the United States all informed the ways that Jewish women experienced life and performed their femininity differently. All were integral to the construction of Jewish-American womanhood.

The intersecting pressures of mainstream American and distinctly Jewish domestic norms shaped how Jewish women in the first half of the twentieth century perceived Jewish-American womanhood and their roles in both assimilation and cultural maintenance. Cooking was an important location for the performance of femininity in both contexts and therefore the kitchen became a critical setting for the construction of the Jewish-American woman over these fifty

[16] Ewa Morawska, "Assimilation in the United States: Nineteenth Century," *Jewish Women's Archive*, 2017, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/assimilation-in-united-states-nineteenth-century.
[17] Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her*, 136, 164.

years. The English-language cookbooks written for Jewish women discussed here provide a lens into the changing domestic expectations of these decades and the dominant cultural notions of womanhood. They are a small sample of the cookbooks published, but demonstrate the major trends of the time period with regards to expectations and ideals.[18] However, it is important to note, as Megan Elias states, that "cookbooks are full of words but they don't really tell us what people eat."[19] That is to say, the information pulled from these cookbooks should not be read as though it is exactly what every, or even any, Jewish woman of the time was following. Instead, it represents the expectations of select members of a group and perhaps even the ideals of the group more broadly, just never necessarily the reality. As a result, this study relies upon the richness of this cookbook material to draw historical insights about Jewish-American women and their gendered identities, rather than their everyday lives.

The Jewish cookbooks published during the first half of the twentieth century tended to fall into two main categories of focus, either pushing assimilation or attempting to strengthen Judaism in America. The former were mostly published during the first two decades of the century when the Jewish community was split between middle-class Germanic Jews and the more recent immigrants from Eastern Europe. However, as all Jewish people became more Americanized and moved into the middle class, concerns over loss of Jewish identity and tradition moved to the forefront of the concerns. In both cases, the books constructed women as responsible for their family's values and relationships to both American and Jewish identities.

Uptown Matrons: Cookbooks as Intra-Class Cultural Transmission

[18] The cookbooks referenced in this study were accessed at either the Dorot Division of the New York Public Library or the Center for Jewish History Archives. They are not a comprehensive or representative sample, rather they are the books that were available and had enticing titles.

[19] Elias, *Food on the Page,* 1.

The earliest examples of Jewish, English-language cookbooks in this study are community cookbooks compiled by wealthy Germanic Jewish women and sold in support of philanthropic causes.[20] These women were a part of the first wave of Ashkenazi immigration primarily from the central European states that later became Germany. Many of their families had served as middle-men traders between city and country in the Old World and were forced to immigrate by the industrialization of Central Europe which eliminated their positions and caused a loss of livelihoods.[21] Most of the women who came to the United States, therefore, hailed from small towns and were used to particular gender norms and expectations such as exclusion from religious study and activity outside of their daily prayers, arranged marriage, as well as numerous tasks necessary to running a proper Jewish household and supporting their husbands' work.[22] In the United States, these women initially helped their husbands with peddling businesses or small shops, but by the twentieth century most families were firmly established financially and the women no longer had to engage in wage labor.[23] Instead, they could fully devote their time to the home, religion, and philanthropic pursuits. These women tended to be highly involved in Reform Judaism, which was in turn modeled on "contemporary American middle-class Protestantism," because it ascribed women different, more equal roles in religion than Orthodox Judaism, such as sitting with the men during services and being counted as part of a minyan, the requisite 10 people for public Jewish prayer.[24] In particular, as part of the acculturation of their ethnic group,

[20] The cookbooks in this study in particular were written to raise funds for an orphan asylum and for a synagogue's sisterhood though the general scope of such books ranged widely and formed an extension of general philanthropic efforts of such groups. Cookbooks provided the women with a means to engage in philanthropy that directly tied to expectations of proper femininity.
[21] Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her,* 70-72.
[22] Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her,* 76-77.
[23] Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her,* 82-88.
[24] Morawksa, "Assimilation in the United States."

these women were expected to "perform their part flawlessly as creators of a peaceful and decorous home and as transmitters of morality."[25] They aspired towards the epitome of middle-class American femininity and modified Jewish tradition to fit that mold. As the Jewish women most acculturated and with the best grasp of the English language at the turn of the century, it is not surprising that their cookbooks, the first sources in this study, became the means to share those aspirations.

The Auxiliary Society of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society of the New York Orphan Asylum published *The Auxiliary Cookbook* in 1909 as a fundraiser for the Asylum.[26] In the same year, the Sisterhood of the West End Synagogue published *The Practical Cookbook (Second Edition)* to benefit their charity work.[27] These two cookbooks are exemplary of the many community cookbooks of this sort published during the time period and provide a good indication of not only how these books were structured, but also their notions of proper Jewish-American womanhood. In the words of Anne Bower, they served as "communal partial autobiographies" that asserted the ideals and status achievements of their authors and therefore hold historical significance.[28] One way these ideals were expressed is through the recipes submitted by women with Germanic last names. Overwhelmingly these names are presented with Mrs. as the title, thus implicitly making it clear that married women were the only ones properly able to contribute to these public manifestations of charity and indicating the way that

[25] Paula Hyman, "Gender and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identities," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, and Society* 8 (2/3, 2017), 155.
[26] *The Auxiliary Cookbook, (*New York: Auxiliary Society of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society of New York Orphan Asylum, 1909).
[27] The Sisterhood of the West End Synagogue, *The Practical Cookbook (Second Edition)*, (New York City, 1909).
[28] Anne L. Bower, "Cooking Up Stories: Narrative Elements in Community Cookbooks," in *Recipes for Reading: Communities, Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, ed. Anne L. Bower, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 30-31.

marriage stood as part of the standard of womanhood within the community. The cookbooks are not kosher, despite their Jewish authors, and contain recipes with shellfish or meat and milk together, though neither book has recipes for pork.[29] Kosher food had historically been a way to separate Jewish people from non-Jewish people, so Jewish women creating non-kosher cookbooks was a break from tradition and showed the levels of assimilation toward which they strived.[30] That said, both also include sections of Passover recipes that are their most explicitly Jewish content, thereby illustrating the tensions inherent in becoming assimilated.[31] Assimilation included striving for American life, but not necessarily fully letting go of centuries of religious tradition. Indeed, a combination of the two seems to have perhaps been the ideal end goal.

In all cookbooks, recipes provide indications of class status in addition to just food. Recipes for lebkuchen, sauerbraten, matzoh kugel, and gefilte fish, relatively traditional German or Jewish foods that occur in many of these cookbooks, reveal the types of labor that were expected of the women reading them. Lebkuchen recipes are found in both the *Auxiliary Cookbook* and the *Practical Cookbook*, which is not surprising as it is a common German dessert and the contributors to these books were all Germanic-Jewish women. Both recipes call for expensive ingredients such as specifically branded baking powder, large amounts of sugar, and multiple different spices, implying that the women making them would be able to afford such things. The ingredients are included in the instructions as they become necessary, for example, "Beat eight eggs very light with two small teacupfuls of sugar," rather than separated into a list

[29] *The Auxiliary Cookbook,* 13-19, 25-27; Sisterhood of the West End Synagogue, *The Practical Cookbook*, 16. As stated earlier, the kosher dietary laws center around certain food prohibitions. Jewish people are not supposed to eat shellfish, pork or certain birds and they are not allowed to eat meat and milk within the same meal.
[30] Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 180-181.
[31] *The Auxiliary Cookbook,* 69-70; Sisterhood of the West End Synagogue, *The Practical Cookbook*, 110-113.

above the directions, which is an indication that the recipes have been copied down from word of mouth in home kitchens.[32] In content the recipes are quite complex but do not include many instructions, showing an expectation of basic cooking knowledge, which for women of the authors' class at this time was most likely performed by a hired cook supervised by the lady of the house.

Beyond recipes, both books also include advice about proper womanhood, particularly in an American context.[33] *The Auxiliary Cookbook's* additional sections are significantly longer and go beyond the kitchen to illuminate the authors' ideas about proper womanhood. They include an essay titled "Woman," by Robert G. Ingersoll, that discusses what makes a woman praiseworthy, including her innate domestic abilities and the fact that she is "the redeeming glory of humanity, the sanctuary of all the virtues, pledge of all perfect qualities of heart and head."[34] This language is quite secular and places women on a pedestal in a way that ties them to the broader American cultural expectations of moral femininity rather than just Judaism. The literary quotes and advice that *The Practical Cookbook* includes under each section title also connect to broader American culture as they come from all sorts of popular literature, most of which is not Jewish, including lines such as "A good digestion to you all, and once more I shower a welcome on you, welcome all" from Shakespeare at the start of the canapes and appetizers section and "I always thought cold victuals nice, My choice would be vanilla ice" ascribed to O.W. Holmes at the start of the frozen dainties section.[35] The reader is not necessarily expected to be familiar with all of the authors; the purpose of the quotes is to allow the cookbook compilers to assert that they are

[32] *The Auxiliary Cookbook,* 88; *Sisterhood* of the West End Synagogue, *The Practical Cookbook*, 85.
[33] *The Auxiliary Cookbook*, 109-142; Sisterhood of the West End Synagogue, *The Practical Cookbook*, 14-119.
[34] *The Auxiliary Cookbook,* 123.
[35] *The Practical Cookbook*, 1, 59.

cultured in a broadly Jewish and American way. Like the Passover recipes, the inclusion of both sorts of quotes hints at the complexities involved in acquiring American identities while still giving a nod to the Jewish. Overall, these two cookbooks clearly are intended to be a form of intragroup cultural transmission for wealthy, Germanic-Jewish women who were married. Their limited Jewish characteristics combined with strong American norms points to the fact that White, middle-class, Christian women were the reference point for femininity for these women and that these cookbooks served as a means of sharing information on how to achieve said cultural status within the bounds of a Jewish community. Concurrently, their use as fundraisers for various charitable causes is direct evidence of the expansion of domesticity into philanthropy for these women.

Downtown Daughters: Expert Authorities Seeking to Shape Jewish-American Domesticity

As assimilated, middle-class, Germanic-Jewish women used their homes to create American Jewish identities, they also expanded their roles in the public sphere through activities and causes that were traditionally understood as "women's work" such as temple sisterhoods and settlement houses. Having been told by Rabbis and other prominent men that "women were by nature moral arbiters and the source of religiosity – initially in the home and ultimately in civic society," these women found a variety of ways to live up to this expectation.[36] Temple sisterhoods developed within Reform congregations as a way for Jewish women to engage in philanthropy and have influence over their own and their congregations' religious lives. The activities of the sisterhoods, such as educating children, tended to fall within the bounds of

[36] Paula Hyman, "Feminist Studies and Modern Jewish History," in *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies*, ed. Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 124.

domesticity, however they were clearly public as well.[37] Settlement houses also served as a space of both domesticity and public work for wealthy Jewish women who helped to fund and organize "recreation, education, and medical and social service programs, primarily for immigrants."[38] These activities tended to focus on women and children, thus relating to the norms of womanhood that ascribed the home as woman's domain and only interest; however, they also allowed women access to and influence within the public sphere. In particular, the women involved in settlement houses sought to promote the Americanization of immigrant women through the kitchen. Along with domestic scientists of the time, they attempted to reform the immigrant Jewish diet, and by extension the immigrant Jewish woman, and encouraged the creation of "a uniquely American home, clean, healthy and well nourished," thus directly bringing their public work back into the domestic sphere.[39] Of course, the women who were able to expand their domesticity thusly and who felt they had the right to mold others' were those who did not have to engage in wage labor and had the time and money to devote to these organizations. In addition, they were the closest to the white Protestant end goal of assimilation and felt it was their duty to spread their influence thusly. Particularly through their work in settlement homes, they transformed the Jewish American kitchen from a set of norms shared within a class group to one shared across class and ethnic lines, setting the stage for Jewish women's expressions of gender for years to come.

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[37] Pamela S. Nadell and Rita J. Simon, "Ladies of the Sisterhood: Women in the American Reform Synagogue 1900-1930," in *Active Voices: Women in Jewish Culture*, edited by Maurie Sacks, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 66-67.

[38] Sarah Henry Lederman, "Settlement Houses in the United States," *Jewish Women's Archive,* 2017, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/settlement-houses-in-united-states.

[39] Marcella White Campbell, "Domestic Religion: Food, Class and Choice in the Memoirs of Jewish American Women Writers," (Masters diss., San Francisco State University, 2004), 26-28.

The story of the settlement houses is not just that of the wealthy women, however; it also must center the immigrants themselves. Jewish immigration was a family migration and therefore more Jewish women immigrated than any other European group of the time.[40] As a consequence of their more recent arrival, these Eastern-European Jewish women had to work at least until marriage, frequently in sweatshops, and lived in ethnic enclaves that existed as a point of tension between connection to tradition and dramatically different experiences from the 'Old Country.' The roots of their behavior and norms in the United States came from the gender roles found in the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. In the 'Old Country,' the Jewish men with the highest prestige were scholars and all men aspired to that role. As a result, as in Central Europe, Jewish women were excluded from formal religious roles and training, but, due to the lack of income derived from scholarship, they played large roles supporting their families economically. These women were active in the public sphere of the market and achieved a comparatively high level of autonomy in the secular world compared to non-Jewish women.[41] When they then immigrated to the United States, Eastern European women brought with them experiences and expectations of autonomy that life in the New World only served to strengthen.

Few of the Eastern European families had much money, so all members of the family that could work were expected to do so, including young women. Wage labor, primarily in factories, gave Jewish women new levels of independence that led to social habits such as an embrace of the birth control movement.[42] Furthermore, while arranged marriages were the norm in European Jewish communities, the new freedoms of the United States provided these young Jewish

[40] Hyman, "Gender and the Immigrant Jewish Experience," 222.
[41] Paula Hyman, "Gender and the Immigrant Experience in the United States" in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective,* ed. Judith Reesa Baskin, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991). 223-224.
[42] Hyman, "Gender and the Immigrant Experience in the United States," 228.

women, like their German counterparts, the opportunity to choose their partners and marry for love.[43] These matches tended to be made during the many leisure activities and unchaperoned instances of male-female socializing that were also a new part of life for Jewish young people in the United States.[44] Thus, the immigrant generation and their children created new norms of behavior, particularly for women, that built off of expectations from the "old country" combined with the experiences of the new.

Growth in Jewish women's autonomy in the United States led to great anxiety on the part of Jewish people, both Germanic and Eastern European, who parlayed their broader fears about assimilation and difference into a series of negative stereotypes and judgements about immigrant Jewish women. In the first decades of the twentieth century, as Eastern-European Jewish people struggled to adapt and the more established German Jews worried about losing their position in broader society and its benefits, the "Ghetto Girl" stereotype of young, unmarried Jewish women and their desires emerged. The Ghetto Girl was condemned for "excessive and undeserved wants," such as fancy clothing or the ability to go out alone with men, which were, for those using the stereotype, "the meeting ground of anxieties about Americanization, class status and gender."[45] Through attempting to fit in and adapt to American norms, she went outside the bounds of acceptable, repressed, white Christian-based femininity and thus threatened the very notions of who had class or who was part of American society. Seeking to combat this stereotype, settlement house workers focused on Jewish girls, among others, and sought to mold

[43] Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans*, 59.
[44] Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, 100-101.
[45] Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans,* 43.

their assimilation towards American domesticity through activities such as cooking classes as a strategy for the betterment of all Jewish people.

The Settlement Cookbook, with recipes and tips designed to help more recent immigrants assimilate to America, particularly through the domestic sphere, demonstrates these goals clearly. Originally published in 1901 and still in print today, *The Settlement Cookbook* was compiled by a number of mostly Jewish women involved in the Settlement House in Milwaukee who wanted both to raise money and to have a collection of recipes to give to young women in cooking classes so that they did not have to copy them down.[46] The book aims to instruct the reader on how to be a proper American woman, a goal that would have made the most impact on recently immigrated women, though the recipes are designed to appeal to all. The reader here is assumed to be a recent immigrant who perhaps is married with a family, but more likely is an unmarried "daughter." The first chapter of the book is titled "Household Rules" and includes instructions on basic skills of housekeeping such as setting a table, washing dishes, cleaning a room, and starting a fire, in addition to domestic-scientific information such as how to make level measurements, relative nutritional values of food, and an explanation of how food is digested.[47] The rest of the book is devoted to hundreds of recipes and a section of advertisements, mostly for dry goods.

The Settlement Cookbook has no formal link to Judaism through name or organization. Its recipes are not kosher and there are sections explicitly devoted to shellfish and to pork.[48] At

[46] Judith Friedlander, "Jewish Cooking in the American Melting-Pot," *Revue Francaise d'Etudes Americaines* 27-28, (February 1986), 90.
[47] Mrs. Simon Kander, *The Settlement Cookbook: The Way to a Man's Heart,* (Milwaukee: Settlement Cookbook Company, 1901), 3-16.
[48] Kander, *The Settlement Cookbook*, 1901, 109-112, 125-127.

the same time, however, the meat section includes a paragraph on how to make meat kosher, the recipe index lists all the Passover recipes that are scattered throughout various sections, and the soup section includes "Beet Soup Russian Style (Fleischik)" and "Beet Soup Russian Style (Milchik)," which indicate that one recipe is meant to be eaten with kosher meals that contain meat and the other is for those that contain milk.[49] The 1920 edition of *The Settlement Cookbook* also contains recipes for "Beef a la Mode or Sauerbraten," lebkuchen, and filled fish, which is essentially gefilte fish with an English name. All of the recipes have the ingredients and their amounts listed separately above the instructions and the instructions are quite thorough. There are two recipes each for both lebkuchen and filled fish, one which is more simple either in terms of ingredients or specific equipment such as grinders and one which is more complex.[50] These multiples of recipes speak to the two different intended audiences of the book and their varying class statuses, and the inclusion of clearly Jewish content demonstrates the complexities of constructing Jewish-American womanhood. The authors of *The Settlement Cookbook* assert that women were expected to know how to perform proper American domesticity and did not necessarily need to cook kosher recipes, but at the same time acknowledge that they might adhere to some rules or celebrate occasional holidays. Unlike *The Practical Cookbook* and *The Auxiliary Cookbook,* which were intended for intra-class cultural transmission and seem to assume readers with similar backgrounds and goals, *The Settlement Cookbook* had to promote and prove the worth of assimilation to all Jewish people, particularly the new immigrants. In this vein, the recipes tend to be simpler and the housekeeping instructions are more thorough. *The*

[49] Kander, *The Settlement Cookbook*, 1901, 114, XXIV-XXV, 79.
[50] Mrs. Simon Kander, *The Settlement Cookbook*: *The Way to a Man's Heart, 10th ed,* (Milwaukee: Settlement Cookbook Company, 1920) 140, 434, 115.

Settlement Cookbook reads as a manual rather than a set of suggestions, demonstrating the difference between facilitating the assimilation of all Jews as opposed to just maintaining one's own social status.

The fields of nutritional and domestic science grew and professionalized women's cooking throughout the United States from 1900 through the 1930s, the same time frame as when the Jewish women in the Settlement House were trying to teach acculturation through the kitchen. Domestic and nutritional science became highly popular during the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century, engendering many cookbooks, cooking schools, and diet plans. In particular, those in the field emphasized the importance of level measurements and following recipes correctly.[51] These women working to redefine the way that Americans ate also created new spheres of public, professional existence, that, while domestic, still expanded the positions open to women. They "assembled all the appurtenances necessary to a full-fledged profession: syllabi for course work at every level, degree-granting programs of study, a professional organization, a journal, and annual meetings," thus asserting themselves into the traditionally male public professional sphere.[52] It is important to note that while lower class women and women of color had been cooking for pay for years as domestic servants, domestic science as a field was dominated by white, middle-class women who sought employment that did not detract from their respectability. Their efforts, along with the cookbooks they produced, helped to define white, middle-class, American femininity of the first half of the twentieth century by the

[51] Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking*, 65.
[52] Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), 7.

domestic, even as it started to break out of the home, and would come to influence the trajectory of Jewish cookbooks and femininity as well.

The Jewish cookbooks published a decade or two after the community cookbooks and *The Settlement Cookbook* increasingly drew upon these professional fields and their norms. *The International Jewish Cookbook,* written in 1918, and *The Modern Cookbook,* written in 1925, both cite cooking instructors as their authors as opposed to the housewives of the earlier books.[53] They also emphasize health and nutritional science within their texts. The introduction to *The International Jewish Cookbook* states that "As a rule the typical Jewish dish contains a large proportion of fat which when combined with cereal or vegetable, fruits, nuts, sugar or honey, forms a dish supplying all the nourishment required for a well-balanced meal."[54] Recipe section introductions in *The Modern Cookbook* similarly include nutritional information about ingredients, such as "Eggs, like milk contain all the elements necessary for the support of the body," and the end of the book includes advice on what dishes to cook and eat to reduce the calories in meals.[55] Diet and nutrition, included in these cookbooks because of the expertise of their authors, was used as a tool of acculturation to make Jewish people fit into American dietary norms.

There is one striking different between *The International Jewish Cookbook* and *The Modern Cookbook*: the former is kosher and the latter is not, which is evidence of a changing focus away from assimilation and towards cultural maintenance. *The Modern Cookbook* follows the conventions of the earlier mentioned cookbooks in this sample. It is not kosher, though it is

[53] Florence Kreisler Greenbaum, *The International Jewish Cookbook, (*New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1918); L. Schwarzkopf, *The Modern Cookbook, (*New York: United Order of True Sisters, 1925).
[54] Greenbaum, *The International Jewish Cookbook*, vii.
[55] Schwarzkopf, *The Modern Cookbook*, 9, 259-260.

produced by a Jewish women's organization, the United Order of True Sisters, and contains Passover recipes. There is health and cleaning advice in the back and the target audience appears to be relatively assimilated Jewish women. In terms of recipes, the matzo kugel is called "Matzoth Pudding" in what seems like a nod towards American foods and contains fewer ingredients than recipes from earlier cookbooks, perhaps to accommodate more limited budgets. Similarly, the sauerbraten recipe instructs the reader to "proceed as for pot roast" after taking the meat out of the curing liquid, thus implying that the reader would know how to cook the more American dish but not the German one.[56] These recipes testify to goals of assimilation at the time. If women truly knew how to cook American dishes but not German ones, then they would seem to have successfully Americanized and let their ethnic and religious identities become the less familiar pieces.

The International Jewish Cookbook, on the other hand, diverges from the mold and from these expectations of Americanization. The cover page of the cookbook states that it contains "1600 recipes according to the Jewish dietary laws with the rules for koshering," thereby clearly setting up the readership as Jewish women who keep kosher.[57] In the introduction, author Florence Greenbaum states that "the manner of presentation is clear and simple and if directions are followed carefully, will insure success to the inexperienced housewife" which further hones in on her intended audience.[58] The only non-recipe instructions in the book are "rules for kashering" rather than cleaning or other housekeeping, making it clear that Jewish women may need guidance to fulfill the expectation of ensuring their meat is kosher, but that they are

[56] Schwarzkopf, *The Modern Cookbook*, 256, 77
[57] Greenbaum, *The International Jewish Cookbook*, cover page.
[58] Greenbaum, *The International Jewish Cookbook,* v.

expected to know how to keep a home clean.[59] The recipes in *The International Jewish Cookbook* are quite detailed and descriptive, for example telling the reader to "spread the dough in long pans with well-floured hands" when making lebkuchen.[60]As a kosher cookbook, *The International Jewish Cookbook* serves as a transition point and introduces new expectations of femininity and domesticity to the table. No longer does a white, middle-class, Christian norm with a small section of Judaism reign supreme; rather, women must know how to maintain a Jewish home and enact proper Jewish rituals such as kashering, thereby bringing religious identity back into focus.[61]

As Jewish cookbooks were beginning to emphasize kosher cooking as part of proper Jewish womanhood, corporations expanded their cookbook reach to purposefully target Jewish women. Megan Elias writes that corporate cookbooks and diet or "slimming" cookbooks were the two big trends in cookbooks in the first half of the twentieth century. Corporate cookbooks targeted women as food providers for the family and "routinely privileged new processes rather than new flavors."[62] They attempted to facilitate culinary labor through an emphasis on novelty and creativity. These cookbooks, produced to promote kitchen appliances or food items, became popular around the 1930s and introduced new dishes made with new technologies to appeal to women and keep them respectably tethered to the kitchen.[63] For example, the newly invented Frigidaire allowed food to be kept for multiple days, thus opening up more options for meals

[59] Greenbaum, *The International Jewish Cookbook*, ix.
[60] Greenbaum, *The International Jewish Cookbook*, 293.
[61] To kasher is the verb for making meat kosher. For meat to be properly kosher it must contain no blood. First the animal must be killed in a ritual manner by a Jewish slaughterer. Then the blood must be drawn out of the flesh by soaking in cold water and heavy salting.
[62] Elias, *Food on the Page,* 44, 45, 52.
[63] Elias, *Food on the Page*, 43-44.

while simultaneously requiring extra meal-planning thought and time of the women cooking.[64] The two main Jewish corporate cookbooks of the time, *Tempting Kosher Dishes* from the B. Manischewitz Company and *Crisco Recipes for the Jewish Housewife* from Proctor and Gamble, certainly fit this mold while additionally emphasizing Jewish tradition and kosher cooking.[65]

Tempting Kosher Dishes is an interesting commodification of the community cookbook because it consists of recipes submitted by "housewives, from every quarter of the globe where Manichewitz's Matzo Products are used," yet it is published by a corporation looking to increase purchases of its products, in this case assorted forms of matzos and other prepared Jewish foods.[66] Similarly, Crisco claims that the recipes in its cookbook, though not submitted by women from around the country, have "been thoroughly tested in a strictly Orthodox Jewish home," thus linking them to home cooking and the authority of Orthodox Judaism.[67] Both cookbooks also utilize the unique strategy of writing recipes in both Yiddish and English, presumably to appeal to as many consumers as possible. The Manischewitz book can be read both front to back and back to front with the English starting in the front and the Yiddish starting in the back. The two sections contain the same recipes and are separated by advertisements for Manichewitz's products and the cleanliness of their new factories.[68] In contrast, *Crisco Recipes for the Jewish Housewife* has the Yiddish recipe written directly above the English. The introduction to the book explains the purpose of this structure is "to enable two people (as for example, a Yiddish-reading mother and an English-reading daughter) to work together on any

[64] Elias, *Food on the Page,* 50, 59.
[65] *Tempting Kosher Dishes*, (Cincinnati: The B. Manichewitz Co., 1930); *Crisco Recipes for the Jewish Housewife,* Cincinnati: Proctor and Gamble, 1933).
[66] *Tempting Kosher Dishes,* foreword.
[67] *Crisco Recipes for the Jewish Housewife*, introduction.
[68] *Tempting Kosher Dishes*, 78-79.

particular recipe," thus definitively situating the purpose of the book as both advertisement and transmission of domestic skills and values between women.[69]

In terms of recipes, *Tempting Kosher Dishes* contains none of the common recipes shared by the other books in this study, but that is not particularly surprising as the goal of the cookbook was to introduce new recipes for traditional ingredients rather than emphasize traditional recipes themselves. The recipes that are included, however, have relatively detailed instructions and require "moderate" ovens instead of exact temperatures thus implying a reader with less access to modern technology.[70] *Crisco Recipes* on the other hand contains recipes for lebkuchen and gefilte fish. The gefilte fish recipe is from scratch, requiring the cook to chop the raw fish before combining it with other ingredients and baking in a "moderate oven (350˚F)."[71] Chopping fish for gefilte fish, while traditional, is quite time consuming and difficult, thus implying a cook with lots of time, and including exact oven temperatures points towards an expectation that some readers will have the newest technology in ovens. These corporate cookbooks walk the line between mainstream American cookbook culture and specifically Jewish domesticity. They were designed more for advertisement than true recipe sharing, thus bringing Jewish women into the fold of American consumer capitalism while allowing them to retain their uniquely Jewish traditions and kosher recipes. As such, they serve as a transition point between the above-mentioned cookbooks and their emphasis on food as a means of assimilation and fitting into American norms and the cookbooks below which focus on the kitchen as a tool for maintaining religious and cultural tradition among Jewish-Americans.

[69] *Crisco Recipes for the Jewish Housewife,* introduction.
[70] *Tempting Kosher Dishes,* 61.
[71] *Crisco Recipes for the Jewish Housewife*, 7.

Suburban Moms: Cooking to Preserve the Jewish Nation

Emphases on maintaining Jewish tradition through the kitchen connect to a shift towards the domestication of American religion more broadly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Judaism in the United States became less connected to the Torah and formal synagogue attendance, Jews adopted "the ideal of a domesticated Jewishness in which the home and its inhabitants became the core of a modern Jewish identity."[72] If the home was to be the center of Jewish life and identity, it naturally fell upon women as keepers of the home to maintain the religion. In particular, food was an important means of religious continuity, with the kitchen as the location where "religious life and domestic life were bound together."[73] Though women in the first part of the twentieth century did not necessarily maintain kosher kitchens, their cooking of Jewish foods made them into "personifications of Jewish knowledge and tradition" and helped them maintain Judaism despite the threats of assimilation and Americanization.[74] Then, as Jews became more and more assimilated, religious authorities such as Rabbis pushed these women to more fully meet their religious obligations through the kitchen, leading to the final type of cookbook discussed here, which emphasized kosher foods as the true way to maintain Judaism.

Two Jewish Newspapers, *The Jewish Daily Forward* and *The Jewish Examiner,* published cookbooks in the 1940s that emphasized protection of culinary tradition and the need for Jewish women to maintain kosher households moving forward. Keeping kosher had long

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[72] Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture 1880-1950*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 5-6.
[73] Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, "Kitchen Judaism," in *Getting Comfortable in New York: The American Jewish Home, 1880-1950*, ed. Susan L. Braunstein and Jenna Weissman Joselit, (New York: Jewish Museum, 1990), 77.
[74] Joselit, *The Wonders of America,* 184.

been the defining link between food and religion for Jewish people, but many Jews in the United States abandoned the laws of Kashrut for ideological, convenience or economic reasons.[75] In the late 1940s and 1950s, though, as Jews seemed to be making the final push of assimilation into the middle class through movement to the suburbs, there was also a new influx of kosher cooking and eating thanks to increased availability of kosher foods, general religious revival, and cookbooks such as those discussed below.[76] In particular, as "the consumption of Jewish food [came] to stand in for practice," Jewish women were told that they had the ability to influence their family's levels of assimilation and of religious observance through the extent to which they kept kosher or served traditional foods.[77] These Jewish women, it should be noted, were not wealthy Germanic women in uptown New York, nor were they usually immigrants living in Jewish enclaves. Instead, the women were first or second generation American Jews who might have lived in suburbs where there were few other Jewish families and maintaining religious tradition was more difficult. Thus, the cookbooks such as the *Jewish American Cookbook* and *The Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Recipe Book* which contain only kosher recipes were written by the recipe editors of their respective papers to encourage kosher cooking in general as a means to preserve Jewish identity and tradition in the United States.[78] Of course, since these were cookbooks, their authors positioned women as the ones responsible for this preservation.

The *Jewish American Cookbook*, written by Regina Frishwasser, recipes editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, in 1946, primarily concerned itself with kosher cooking as maintenance

[75] Joselit, *The Wonders of America*, 72.
[76] Joselit, *The Wonders of America,* 217
[77] Campbell, "Domestic Religion," 41.
[78] Regina Frishwasser, *Jewish American Cookbook*, (New York: Forward Association, 1946); *The Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Recipe Book*, (Brooklyn: Judea Prize Publishing Company, 1949).

of tradition. Even the recipes, which have ingredients integrated into the instructions instead of written above, seem to harken back to an earlier period of cookbook writing. In the introduction Frishwasser refers to the recipes as part of "the Yiddish cuisine…[which] has as its background traditional dishes that have come down through the ages changed by our people in our migratory wanderings," thus explicitly stating the importance of tradition in their creation.[79] Later in the introduction, she speaks to the necessity of this cookbook for maintaining those traditions. The book is written in English, despite the fact that most of *The Forward* is published in Yiddish, in order to accommodate the assimilatory language loss that left American-born daughters only able to read English and thus unable to read and cook dishes written down in Yiddish. Frishwasser, in fact, explicitly states that she has written the book for "these daughters" who have been unable to access the recipe pages of *The Forward* or contribute recipes to its contests like their mothers.[80] The emphases on English and on daughters are both important here. Publishing the book in English speaks to cultural transmission difficulties brought on by assimilation and language loss, while the targeting of daughters further implies that women must be the ones to transmit and maintain culture.

The cookbook presents recipes and food as the tools for that cultural transmission between women and their families. In terms of content, all the recipes are kosher but there is no explicit discussion of that fact or of kashering and the recipes are mostly those that we think of as traditionally Jewish today, such as challah and gefilte fish, with a few American influences, such as ravioli and chicken chow mein, thrown in.[81] Despite being published in the 1940s when many

[79] Frishwasser, *Jewish American Cookbook,* iii.
[80] Frishwasser, *Jewish American Cookbook*, iv.
[81] Frishwasser, *Jewish American Cookbook,* 249, 68, 151-152.

ovens could tell specific temperatures, the Matzoh and Prune Pudding and other recipes must be baked in a moderate oven. However, this should not be read as indicative of the technology available to the readers of the cookbooks, as other recipes call for refrigerators, and these were traditional recipes submitted by readers who may have conceived of them when oven temperature could not be specified.[82] Through recipes such as these, the *Jewish American Cookbook* reads as a clear effort to combat culture and language loss that comes from assimilation and places women's labor in the kitchen at the center of the struggle due to belief that women's influence over the home and family allowed them to transmit culture in the most successful manner.

The Jewish Examiner Kosher Prize Recipe Book goes even further and positions women cooking kosher food as integral to the continuation of Judaism itself in the United States. The author and publisher of the cookbook highly value both domesticity and the laws of Kashrut, pressing them upon the Jewish women of the United States. The introduction states that "many homes have broken down because the 'lady of the house' did not know how to cook and never wanted to learn. To be known as a good cook, never detracts from the dignity of womanhood," thereby linking cooking with being a good woman and homemaker.[83] Not only were women clearly responsible for cooking, but this quote implies that were they to shirk that duty, the entire home would fall apart, placing even more responsibility on the backs of women and hinting at the eventual message of the book that Jewish women have duties that keep the entire religion together. Building this idea further, in a section entitled "Why the Kosher Cookbook?" Rabbi Louis D. Gross, editor of *The Jewish Examiner*, states that "whatever makes Jewish domestic life

[82] Frishwasser, *Jewish American Cookbook*, 316, 110.
[83] *Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Recipe Book*, 4.

more attractive and enhances its appeal to the upgrowing generation, is a welcome contribution to the stability and morale of the Jewish people."[84] Stability is a key word here as it expresses the fears of too much assimilation and loss of distinctive identity. Furthermore, the most explicit link between women and religious maintenance found in all of these cookbooks is found in part of the supplementary section about the kosher laws which states "our faith entrusts the fulfillment of our religious regulations to our women and they have always been ready to uphold all things scrupulously according to the prescribed rules."[85]

Finally, to make sure that the reader fully understands the importance of kosher cooking, the cookbook includes an article by Rabbi Abraham M. Keller titled "Kashruth: Advancing the Cause of Jewish National Survival."[86] This article argues that keeping kosher helps the Jewish people to survive as a religious group and as a nation, with extra emphasis on the fact that "a kosher home is a constant and conscious reminder to the youth of its Jewishness," helping to ensure that children will grow up and remain adherent to Judaism.[87] Women are implicitly given this task of "national survival" through the home and the kitchen, which are clearly set up in the rest of the book as women's domains.

Without even discussing recipes, it is clear that *The Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Cookbook* prescribes specific roles for women in terms of religious maintenance through food. The recipes themselves turn that role into a supposedly interesting and exciting task. They include both traditional Jewish recipes, such as bagels and challah, and a number of kosher

[84] *Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Recipe Book*, 5.
[85] *Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Recipe Book*, 176.
[86] *Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Recipe Book*, 184-189.
[87] *Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Recipe Book*, 187.

versions of popular recipes, such as "Kosher Chicken a la King" and "Kosher Chow Mein."[88] There are two recipes for gefilte fish, one for the traditional version which is time consuming and requires skills such as fileting fish, though it does say to grind the fish not chop it, and a mock gefilte fish recipe which is made with a can of salmon.[89] The second recipe is one of the only ones in all of the cookbooks that speaks to the fact that women may not have time for labor-intensive recipes. All of the recipes, traditional or not, are meant to appeal to a woman's family and turn kosher food into the sort of desirable element that will allow Judaism to remain strong in America despite the many pressures of assimilation, the end goal of both of these final cookbooks.

English language Jewish cookbooks in the first half of the twentieth century present a chronology of expectations of womanhood that center around the kitchen and its roles both in mainstream American culture and specifically for Jewish people. That women are the ones cooking is taken completely for granted in all of the cookbooks mentioned above; not one references men cooking. It is the meaning behind that cooking which is salient for understandings of Jewish women's gendered experience. Cooking was not just about feeding one's family. Instead, it was the medium through which these women were expected to facilitate their family's conformity to societal values. Whether the dominant message was to assimilate or to reinvest in Jewish tradition, women were expected to adapt first and then bring their families along. What is complicated of course, is the expectations themselves. Jewish women were not one unified identity group, nor did the messages they receive come from one place. Jewish women derived their identities from the intersection of their ethnic background, their class status,

[88] *Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Recipe Book*, 9-10, 92-93.
[89] *Jewish Examiner Prize Kosher Recipe Book*, 81-82.

their geographic location, their religion and of course their gender. The life of a wealthy Germanic-Jewish married woman in Uptown New York reading *The Practical Cookbook* differed greatly from that of an unmarried Eastern European Jewish girl on the Lower East Side learning from *The Settlement Cookbook*, and both in turn were worlds away from that of a Jewish-American mother in the suburbs post World War Two getting her recipes from *The Jewish American Cookbook*. Yet, all of these women were expected to be domestic and to use that domesticity to influence broader norms within their groups. We cannot understand Jewish people in America without understanding this role of Jewish women in shaping their lives. We cannot understand Jewish women in America without understanding the intersectionality that informed their identities and experiences. And we certainly cannot understand the roles of Jewish women without talking about food and the kitchen.

The cookbooks written by and for Jewish women in the first half of the twentieth century illuminate their intersectional identities, but tell us little about the women's actions or lived experiences. Because cookbooks only speak to idealized notions of womanhood, they cannot accurately capture the ways that women behaved or interacted with each other and broader society. However, newspaper articles written about consumer protests in 1902, 1917, and 1935 provide evidence of the ways that certain Jewish women during this time period acted. Ultimately, these demonstrate a multitude of actions by Jewish women that, along with the variety of identities that they held, evidence the complexity of Jewish-American womanhood.

Chapter Two

Carrying Babies, Hitting Policemen and Feeding their Families: Jewish American Women's Consumer Protest, 1900-1950

Two thousand women, calling themselves the "Suffering Mothers of Williamsburg," paraded through its pushcart district yesterday afternoon and made sure that the peddlers didn't sell potatoes or onions. Many wheeled baby carriages and hundreds carried children in their arms.[90]

The women who prevented the sale of vegetables in 1917 were part of a series of Jewish-American women's consumer protests about the price of food during the first half of the twentieth century. They drew on Jewish traditions of activism, socialism, and labor involvement to organize around issues of food availability in their communities. They staged boycotts of retailers, spoke out against wholesalers, and took their complaints to local, state, and, occasionally, the federal governments. In particular, the Kosher Meat Boycott of 1902, the Food Price Riots of 1917, and the food price protests of 1935 were moments in which these women's actions received significant attention in the English language press and thus provide case studies for the concept of food-based consumer protesting by Jewish women.

The Jewish women's food riots, as these types of consumer protests are known, occurred due to a distinct socio-cultural environment and can be understood by historians as either domestic or traditionally political. The social values and political milieu of the immigrant Jewish community inclined the women towards action generally, while changing food norms combined with a desire to retain tradition incited these specific protests. Scholars of food riots provide two main theoretical lenses through which to understand the women's actions. The first approach is rather conservative and views these kinds of protests as connected to tradition, moral economy,

[90] "Food Riots Go On; 5 Women Jailed, *"New York Tribune*, February 27, 1917.

and acceptance of gender norms; although the scholars allow for a notion of politicization at work during the protests, it is one which exists outside the traditional sphere of power that includes institutions such as the government or big business. In contrast, the second approach looks at the protests as a part of a radical extension of more traditional political activity in the public sphere. Though these schools of thought seem to be in conflict, the events of 1902, 1917, and 1935 show that, in the context of these Jewish-American women's actions, both are applicable and need to be held in tension. In line with theorists who say that food protests are related to traditional gender norms, some newspaper accounts of these protests position the women as deeply domestic through their references to feeding their children and fulfillment of negative feminine stereotypes such as shrieking and becoming hysterical. At the same time, in line with the approach that sees food riots as more overtly political and outside the bounds of femininity, the newspapers also depict the protesters going against feminine gender norms, such as hitting policemen with pieces of meat, and describe them using language typically used to refer to men, such as militaristic. These accounts demonstrate that the protesters expanded the domestic sphere into the streets and simultaneously entered the public sphere to take on larger forces such as beef wholesalers and the New York City government. Just as Jewish-American women convey a complexity of identity through their cookbooks, as explored in Chapter One, food protests inspired Jewish women towards a diversity of actions, which further expands our understanding of Jewish-American womanhood.

Taking to the Streets: Consumer Protesting in 1902, 1917, and 1935

The consumer protests in 1902, 1917, and 1935 revolved around the issue of food prices and were started by Jewish women living in primarily Jewish neighborhoods. The women involved used similar protest and boycott tactics across the years, but these were not iterations of

a singular protest. Each action had distinct characteristics and trajectories due to differences in time and specific protest focus such as beef or potatoes and onions. In particular, the organizational sophistication of the events increased over time as women learned from those who had protested before them. A brief description of each protest's events and outcomes provides the historical background to situate further analysis of how these actions fit into broader notions of the complexity of Jewish-American womanhood.

The 1902 Kosher Meat Boycott, subject of Paula Hyman's ground-breaking article in the field of Jewish women's history, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest: The New York City Kosher Meat Boycott of 1902," is the earliest example of Jewish women's consumer protest in America.[91] The boycott, sparked by an increase in the price of kosher beef from 12 to 18 cents per pound, started among Jewish women on the Lower East Side of New York City on May 14, 1902.[92] The women directly targeted kosher butchers, but indirectly aimed for what they viewed as the kosher beef trust of wholesalers who had been raising the costs of wholesale beef leading to an increase in retail prices. The protest then gained strength through word of mouth and direct action in the streets. By May 15, according to the New York Times, "nearly fifty women were arrested, arraigned in court and fined, butcher stores were attacked and forced to close and policemen were assailed with missiles," which is to say, the women entered into the fray of protesting right away.[93] All sorts of women were involved in these protests as evidenced by a report on May 16 of "two little girls, who with others had shouted at an officer, refused to stay

[91] Paula Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest: The New York City Kosher Meat Boycott of 1902," *American Jewish History* 70, no. 1 (Sep 1, 1980): 91-105.
[92] Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest," 93.
[93] "Fierce Meat Riot on Lower East Side," *New York Times*, May 16, 1902, 1; Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest," 94.

back of the lines, and finally leaped on the policemen, tore of his coat sleeves off and thrown him down in the mud of the gutter."[94] The boycott continued on the Lower East Side and on May 17 spread to other Jewish neighborhoods in New York including Williamsburg and the Bronx through the actions of women from those areas who had been informed of the initial protests.[95] On May 18, the women involved in the boycott on the Lower East Side held a mass meeting and formed the Ladies' Anti-Beef Trust Association which then began formally organizing the actions.[96] Most of the kosher butchers in New York City responded to the boycott by closing their shops from May 17 or 18 until the 27.[97] Around the same time, the boycotting of kosher meat by Jewish women spread to other cities along the East Coast including Boston and Newark.[98] A women in Boston reportedly "took the meat from [a man] and struck him several times in the face with it," an action that was not uncommon in these protests.[99] Eventually, men got involved in the issue, forming the Allied Conference for Cheap Kosher Meat. On June 5 the boycott ended with beef being retailed for 14 cents a pound.[100] Though the men were involved in leadership at the end of the protest and occasionally in the action on the streets, it was, as the *New York Tribune* wrote, "a woman's strike throughout and its efficiency show[ed] what power lies in the hands of the administrator of the family funds."[101] This boycott, its tactics of taking to the streets, forcing shops to close, and attacking those who purchased meat, and its success would serve as a model for the women who protested in 1917 and 1935.

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[94] "Fierce Meat Riots," *New York Times*, May 16, 1902.
[95] "Women Resume Riots Against Meat Shops," *New York Times,* May 18, 1902, 3.
[96] Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest," 95.
[97] *New York Times* Articles, May 18-26, 1902.
[98] "Meat Riots in Boston" and "Newark's Kosher Meat War," *New York Times,* May 23, 1902, 1.
[99] "Meat Riots in Boston."
[100] Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest," 96.
[101] "Anti Trust Women," *New York Tribune,* June 15, 1902, 3.

In 1917, during the Food Price Riots, the Jewish women agitated around food prices more broadly, rather than just kosher meat. The protesting began on February 19 in Brownsville and Brooklyn where what was described as 3,000 women, angered by increases of multiple cents per pound on onions and potatoes, attacked peddlers' carts and generally disrupted shopping.[102] The next day things escalated when "four hundred East Side mothers, many carrying babies and all shouting 'We want food for our children!' poured…to City Hall…and clamored at the Mayor's office for relief from prices which, they said, were driving them to starvation."[103] Thus, though the immediate tactics on the streets bore resemblance to the actions of the women in 1902, from the start the women in 1917 jumped to a different level of negotiation by going directly to the City government. Led by women involved in an organization called the Mother's Anti-High Price League and with some involvement from prominent socialist figures such as Jacob Panken and Marie Ganz, the boycotters continued to appeal to those in the government while also refusing to buy from local merchants and extending their boycott to include chicken.[104] The city eventually tried to help with the food problem by promoting eating rice and buying a train car full of smelts which they attempted to sell to the Jewish women. However, the women wanted to eat their traditional foods and had little interest in these alternative options.[105] At the same time as the New York Riots, Jewish women protested in Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia about similar issues, as the high prices came from food shortages nationwide.[106] There was no clean

[102] "Pushcarts Burned in Riots Over Food."
[103] "Women in Bread Riot at Doors of City Hall," *New York Times*, February 21, 1917.
[104] *New York Times* articles, February 21-23, 1917.
[105] "Perkin's Rice Purchase Brings East Side Hisses," *New York Tribune,* February 27, 1902; "Fine Smelts at 6 Cents Go Begging," *The Sun*, March 2, 1917.
[106] "Women to Fight for Cheap Food," *Boston Daily Globe,* February 22, 1917; "Food Riots in Philadelphia," *Chicago Day Book*, February 22, 1917; "Women with Babes in Arms Mob Officer in Food Riot," *Chicago Day Book,* March 27, 1917.

ending to the Food Price Riots of 1917; instead, when the United States entered World War One, other serious issues caused the protests to peter out.[107] This ending does not discredit the actions however, for the Jewish women proved yet again that they could bring shopping to a halt and made it clear to even higher powers than in 1902 that they would not stand for high prices.

The consumer protesting in 1935 similarly was incited by an increase in prices of a variety of foodstuffs, but unlike either of the two earlier protests, which were largely spontaneous, was organized via women's groups that were already in existence, spread all over the country, and ended up involving many non-Jewish women, particularly African-Americans. This chapter, however, only explores the segments of the protests that were led and carried out by Jewish women in New York City during the spring of 1935. The protesting, which primarily centered around the price of meat, started on May 22 and quickly spread among both Jewish and African-American neighborhoods in the city.[108] The women sought a ten-cent reduction in the price of meat and attempted to achieve this goal through boycotting shops and forcing them to close, picketing, attacking those who bought meat, visiting packing houses to demand price reductions, and attempting to meet with the mayor.[109] The women who led the boycott included Clara Lemlich Shavelson and Rose Nelson, both of whom had roots in labor organizing and were part of the United Council of Working Class Women, a mostly Jewish group made up of many

[107] William Frieburger, "War Prosperity and Hunger: The New York Food Riots of 1917," *Labor History* 25, no. 2 (Apr 1, 1984): 217-239.
[108] Annelise Orleck, ""We are that Mythical Thing Called the Public:" Militant Housewives during the Great Depression," in *Unequal Sisters: An Inclusive Reader in U.S. Women's History*, edited by Vicki l. Ruiz and Ellen Carol Dubois (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 408.
[109] "Boycott of High-Priced Meat Spread by Militant Housewives;" "Meat Price Fight Will Go to Mayor," *New York Times*, May 30, 1935; "Six are Arrested in Meat Boycott," *New York Times*, May 31, 1935.

smaller councils of housewives who could be quickly organized to boycott.[110] This protest in particular was led by the City Action Committee Against the High Cost of Living which included the United Council of Working Class Women along with other related organizations.[111] In New York City the protests ended after four weeks due to threats from gangsters, according to an organizer, but the movement then caught on and spread around the country to include many more both Jewish and non-Jewish women.[112] Again the protests had no decisive end or price cut, but nonetheless demonstrated that these women would not stand idly by as they were charged high prices. Additionally, the protests inspired many of the women involved to enter electoral politics and attempt to make change at the governmental level. For example, Clara Shavelson unsuccessfully ran for New York State Assembly in 1938.[113] The turn towards elections shows how far women had come since the 1902 protests. In 1902 no women had the vote, let alone poor Jewish women on the Lower East Side. Yet, by 1935, women, even those who were Jews in New York City, had the vote and could potentially use the government as another avenue towards change, though as these protests indicate, direct action tactics remained salient and largely the same as in earlier years.

Judaism, Socialism and Food: Motivations for Protest

The protests over food prices were explicitly incited by an increase in food prices, but also were heavily informed by the religious and cultural backgrounds of the protesting women which inclined them towards such behavior. Jewish women in the first half of the twentieth

[110] Orleck, "We are that Mythical Thing Called the Public," 404; Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965,* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995), 225-226.
[111] John W. Harrison, "High Meat Prices Stir Wide Protest," *New York Times*, June 2, 1935, E10.
[112] Orleck, "We are the Mythical Thing Called the Public," 409.
[113] Orleck, "We are the Mythical Thing Called the Public," 410-411.

century tended to take action around the issues that bothered them, whether that be food prices, rent hikes, labor conditions or broader women's movements such as suffrage or birth control. Scholarly interpretations of their actions root them in the compulsion within Judaism towards making the world a better place, which may not account for all of their motivations but certainly plays a role.[114] Melissa Klapper explains that "Jewishness mattered to [the women activists], especially a communal tradition of caring and support and a sense of social justice."[115] This connection between traditional religious activities and activism was utilized especially by the women organizing in New York in 1935 who "emphasized ethnic and community ties in their speeches, likening housewives councils to the women's charitable associations in Eastern European Jewish culture."[116] Additionally, the Jewish women who participated in consumer protests were predisposed to public behavior through historical roles in the public marketplace and the general tolerance of the Jewish community towards such public activities.[117]

These women's ease of activism connects to Jewish tradition, but is also deeply related to the Jewish immigrant community's strong ties to socialism. Jewish socialist involvement in Europe was often connected to the Bund, known either as "the Jewish wing of the revolutionary Russian Social Democratic Labor Party" or as "the General Jewish Labor Union in Russia and Poland."[118] After the 1905 Russian Revolution, socialism became a part of the American Jewish experience due to the migration of many Eastern European activists who brought the Bund to the

[114] Melissa R. Klapper, *Ballots, Babies, and Banners of Peace: American Jewish Women's Activism, 1890-1940* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).
[115] Klapper, *Ballots, Babies, and Banners of Peace*, 3.
[116] Orleck, "We are That Mythical Thing Called the Public," 407
[117] Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest," 103. Also see chapter 1 on the public nature of Jewish women's activity in the marketplace in Europe.
[118] Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History,* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995): 77-78, 111.

United States and strengthened general socialist sentiments among the community.[119] Additionally, socialism gained strength among Jews in the United States because it filled a void created by diminished rabbinic influence between the Old World and the New.[120] In 1902 there was no mention of socialist presence in the newspapers nor did Paula Hyman remark upon it in her article. However, 1917 newspaper articles listed socialists present at rallies and scholars have discussed socialist connections to the actions.[121] Thus, the migration and the need for structure which likely increased with more Jews living in America helps to explain why socialist presence was more pronounced and remarked upon in the 1917 protests than in the 1902 Boycott.

The history of Jewish identity and socialism also led to the importance of Jewish people in the labor movement which in turn influenced and was influenced by the protesting women. Both Jewish men and women became deeply involved in labor organizing in the first half of the twentieth century, which led to the cultivation of an environment in Jewish communities that was open to direct action and certainly influenced and was influenced by the women who engaged in consumer protest. Paula Hyman suggests that the actions and political awareness of the women who protested in 1902 were passed along to younger women in the community who then became active in labor organizing and later protests.[122] And the women active in 1917 and 1935 likely had ties to or were in fact the same women who were active in labor, especially the 1909 Uprising of 20,000, a seminal garment workers strike.[123] For example, Clara Shavelson, who was

[119] Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl,* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990), 183.
[120] Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl,* 178.
[121] "Socialists Aid Riots of Women," *New York Tribune*, March 22, 1917; Frieburger, *War Prosperity and Hunger*; Dana Frank, "Housewives, Socialists, and the Politics of Food: The 1917 New York Cost-of-Living Protests," *Feminist Studies* 11, no 2 (Summer 1985): 255-285.
[122] Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest," 105
[123] The Uprising of 20,000 was a months long strike of mostly Jewish, mostly female garment workers on the Lower East Side in 1909. It did not lead to all the changes that the strikers sought, but it did lead to a large increase in

active in 1917 and a critical organizer in 1935, started the Uprising of 20,000 with her call for a mass strike.[124] Therefore, one cannot separate the consumer protests from the larger political activities of the Jewish community nor can you separate those activities from the broader types of Jewish tradition that motivated the women and provided them the space to take action.

Understanding the consumer protests as an aspect of Jewish-American womanhood does not rely on the women's identities alone; the fact that they were protesting about food in the context of the United States is crucial as well. As elaborated in Chapter One, food is incredibly important to Jewish women and the way that they express their religious, class, and gender identities. Therefore, it is not surprising that, within the context of Judaism and socialism, anger over increased food prices would be enough to send Jewish women into the streets. However, there was an added element of the new realities of American life that also incited action. The women who protested about food prices, especially those of meat, were women who had become accustomed to eating meat daily in the United States, a sharp contrast to the special occasion role of meat in the diets of Jewish people in Europe. Additionally, those who were able to afford meat daily tended to initiate the protests, meaning that they were not the most impoverished of Jewish women, rather they had attained a somewhat comfortable lifestyle.[125] Their desire to maintain living standards added to the reasons food was such a powder-keg topic.

Jewish dietary restrictions and traditions provided the rest of the food-based catalyst for protest. The kosher dietary restrictions require that all kosher meat be specially processed and

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union activity and the recognition that women were a powerful labor organizing force. (Diner and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her*, 183-185); Orleck, "We are that Mythical Thing Called the Public," 404

[124] Annelise Orleck, "Clara Lemlich Shavelson," *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, last modified March 20, 2009, Jewish Women's Archive, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/shavelson-clara-lemlich>.

[125] Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 55.

blessed by a rabbi, which under any circumstances tends to make it more expensive than non-kosher meat, and thus its consumers more sensitive to price changes. The protests in 1902 were specifically around the price of kosher beef, which was higher due to actions of both the secular Beef Trust and the kosher beef wholesalers, who in the eyes of the women constituted a Jewish meat trust.[126] Those who maintained kosher diets, mostly those who were had immigrated themselves rather than the second generation, according to the *New York Tribune*, would not consent to purchasing non-kosher meat, but neither would they buy if the prices were too high.[127] Likewise, the *New York Times* described poultry boycotts in 1917 as "the result of a situation peculiar to the Jewish people," likely because the chickens were kosher processed and importantly because the Jewish women wanted them for Shabbat dinner, a meal that traditionally includes chicken soup.[128] Jewish women sought to continue buying the food they were accustomed to eating rather than switching up their diets, even if those foods were not specifically dictated by the kosher laws. Thus, when, in 1917, the city of New York sent home pamphlets with students about meals to cook with rice as a low-cost alternative to boycotted potatoes, it did nothing to change the terms of the boycott.[129] And when the city purchased a train-car full of smelts and attempted to sell them to the women at cost, the protesters were vocally opposed, going so far as to say that "They ain't kosher. What do you want from our lives?"[130] Therefore, though the food protests arose from the need to maintain a diet that was in some ways uniquely American, the women who carried them out also drew heavily on Jewish

[126] "Meat Rioters Rest," *New York Tribune*, May 19, 1902; "Will Open Shops Today," *New York Tribune*, May 26, 1902.
[127] "Meat Rioters Rest."
[128] "Food Seizure by Commission, Governor's Plan."
[129] "Citizens Put Up $160,000 for Rice," *New York Times*, February 24,1917.
[130] "Fine Smelts at 6 Cents Go Begging."

restrictions and customs, making these actions, like those who enacted them, specifically Jewish-American.

Placing these protests within the history of Jewish political activity and dietary custom goes against the fact that, historically, theorists of food riots and protests have characterized the events as not traditionally political in nature. Drawing on the work of Robin D. G. Kelley, traditionally political in this context refers to actions which seek to transform larger systems and enact long term change within or through interaction with institutions containing political power. Throughout this work, that idea is placed in opposition to the notion of political action outside the traditional sphere of power which attempts to make change in the day-to-day lives of individuals on a much smaller scale that initially seems separate from larger systems.[131] Another way of understanding this distinction is through Patricia Hill Collins' ideas of resistance based in struggles for group survival versus that which is for institutional change.[132] The actions of the Jewish women as understood through this first set of scholarship seem to align with Collins' notion of group survival where women create change within existing power structures for the purpose of ensuring that they and their loved ones survive.[133]

Tradition and Immediate Needs: Early Theories of Food Protests

[131] These definitions are informed by the work of Robin D.G. Kelley who differentiates between infrapolitics, the more everyday forms of resistance enacted by oppressed communities that inform larger political action, and the more traditional or mainstream forms of politics that rely on institutional power. (Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We are Not what we seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (Jun, 1993): 77-78.)

[132] Patricia Hill Collins, "Rethinking Black Women's Activism" in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of the Empowerment,* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 202.

[133] Collins, "Rethinking Black Women's Activism," 204.

Some of the earliest historical understandings of food riots as not traditionally political are found in E.P. Thompson's article "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century" and provide the overarching context for understanding the Jewish women's actions as historically important and only about immediate needs.[134] Thompson argued that food riots in eighteenth-century England called upon a moral economy that was conservative in nature and based upon "a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations" that dictated how food would be economically distributed. When norms between producers and consumers were disrupted, such as by an increase in food prices, the common people would riot and try to return to the original agreements.[135] Thompson also believed that food in particular, with its deep social and cultural meaning, brought about the moral nature of moral economy, meaning that the term can only be applied to certain riots.[136] Thompson only wrote about England in the eighteenth century and only about rural peasants, which has led some to argue that the idea of moral economy is only applicable to analysis of riots occurring either in that same time period or among other peasant societies. [137] However, the article is important for the analysis of these particular protests because Thompson was the first scholar to argue that food riots were "a highly-complex form of direct popular action, disciplined and with clear objects," although not with "overt, articulate political intentions."[138] Therefore, relevant to this project, he introduced food riots as an important element of history and deserving of historical analysis, while also

[134] Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," 76-136.
[135] Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," 78-79.
[136] Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth, "The Moral Economy: Riot, Markets, and Social Conflict," in *Moral Economy and Popular Protest*, edited by Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 19.
[137] Randall and Charlesworth, "The Moral Economy," 24-25.
[138] Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," 4, 126.

asserting that their political nature is outside the traditional realm because it only impacts the immediate needs of food distribution rather than larger political systems.

Building upon Thompson's work, Lynne Taylor's "Food Riots Revisited" asserts that food riots occurred not only during the pre-industrial era, but also during the twentieth century in modern, industrialized nations and sets up further understandings of the Jewish women's actions as outside the sphere of traditional politics.[139] Many scholars have argued that food riots, a reactive form of protest, disappeared "with the establishment of a strong central-nation state and of national markets in the nineteenth century," which ushered in an era of proactive protest such as strikes. However, Taylor makes the claim that food riots continued to arise in situations where "neither the national market mechanism nor the state was able to compensate for the shortages or prevent inflation."[140] That is to say, food riots, being a protest directly in response to a problem, became significantly less likely to occur after centralization of the mechanisms that controlled food supplies, but did not completely disappear as sometimes those mechanisms still failed.

Twentieth century food riots were generally organized outside of the traditional political parties and apparatuses, were conducted in the streets, outside traditional spaces of politics, and were led and participated in by women. According to Taylor, they were based upon "apolitical goals of the protestors" but are also are "examples of politics happening outside of the political arena" making evident the difficulty of assigning the descriptor political to these actions.[141] Though Taylor largely writes off the motivations of such protesters and clearly situates their

[139] Taylor, "Food Riots Revisited," 483-496.
[140] Taylor, "Food Riots Revisited," 483, 486.
[141] Taylor, "Food Riots Revisited," 486, 493.

actions outside of traditional politics, he does bring food riots of the twentieth century into analytical focus and provide certain characteristics with which to define them.

Continuing to focus on the twentieth century and introducing a specifically gendered lens into the discussion of riots and protests, Temma Kaplan's theory of female consciousness asserts that protests such as those discussed here center around women accepting their gender roles and seeking to fill them no matter what. Those with female consciousness "accept the gender system of their society…which assigns women the responsibility of preserving life…[and] demand the rights that their obligations entail."[142] That is to say, female consciousness exists for those women who accept that it is their duty to keep their families alive, for example by feeding them, and who will do whatever it takes to do so, even going so far as to stage riots. The theory of female consciousness provides a rationale for events such as the consumer protests by Jewish women in the twentieth century that were carried out by women seeking affordable prices for food needed by their families. Instead of originating with political discourse and goals, Kaplan argues that action spurred by female consciousness originates in the need to preserve life and, through the collective efforts of women linked by common location and routine, "politicizes the networks of everyday life."[143] Female consciousness is critical for understanding how a group of women, in a time when female participation in the public sphere was incredibly limited, were actively protesting while still seeming to fit into stereotypically feminine gender norms and stereotypes.

The notions of food riots put forth by these three scholars set up the Jewish women's protests to be understood as traditional, outside the political arena, political parties or "formal

[142] Kaplan, "Female Consciousness," 545.
[143] Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action," 45-49.

politics," and reactively connected to immediate needs of survival, as Patricia Hill Collins has explained.[144] Thompson, Taylor, and Kaplan acknowledge that such protests are somewhat political, but it is, as discussed above, a politicization that deals with everyday needs rather than long term change. In particular, the idea of female consciousness sets up political action by women as more connected to their acceptance of the feminine gender role of ensuring one's family's survival rather than about seeking to make long term structural change, an assertion that separates the action from that which is traditionally political. However, these are not the only ways to conceptualize the women's actions. Later theories about protest, especially around food, shape a view of the women as involved in serious political activity, defying norms of femininity, and very much engaging with the public sphere.

Political Identities: Later Theories of Food Protest

Beginning to make the link between public and private sphere, Emily Twarog introduces the idea of "domestic politics," which can explain how these Jewish women used their roles as wives and mothers to act within the public sphere and engage with systemic issues.[145] According to Twarog, "working class and middle class housewives [who] simultaneously embraced their socially ascribed roles as mothers and wives," an echo of Temma Kaplan, while also "critique[ing] the imbalances between wage labor and consumption in a decidedly patriarchal environment" were engaging in "domestic politics."[146] That is to say, these women were referencing their traditionally feminine roles while also engaging with serious political issues and attempting to make systemic change. This theory places women's efforts to feed their families

[144] Collins, "Rethinking Black Women's Activism."
[145] Twarog, *Politics of the Pantry*.
[146] Twarog, *Politics of the Pantry*, 4.

into a broader political context by connecting act of obtaining food to bigger issues within society and the ways that various parties proposed to address them. Twarog only references the protests of 1935 in her book, arguing that they are the protest that involves the transformation of housewife into a political identity.[147] However, the theory is applicable to all three protests because in all three cases women left their ordinary routines to engage with bigger systems and demand change, therefore acting publicly and politically in their roles as mothers and housewives.

Meg Jacobs centers the political identity of the protesting women around their roles as consumers rather than mothers and wives, which promotes an understanding of the Jewish women's actions as political due to their impact on the market as consumers seeking change.[148] According to Jacobs, there was a shift in the twentieth century from economic citizenship being defined by production to being defined by consumption.[149] This shift made it so that consumers moved from merely being people who bought items to being those making demands on the market through activities such as consumer protest.[150] In particular, the Jewish women in this study, who had entered into this form of citizenship through shopping for their families' needs, were faced with the fact that "between 1897 and 1916 the cost of living went up roughly 31%, and then it skyrocketed during World War One."[151] They looked for both immediate and long term solutions to this problem of high prices, directly interacting with purveyors to demand lower prices and using combined efforts to pressure the government into breaking trusts and

[147] Twarog, *Politics of the Pantry*, 3.
[148] Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*.
[149] Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 2.
[150] Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics,* 5.
[151] Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 15, 21.

setting regulations.[152] Food was a particularly salient site for "pocketbook politics" to be enacted because the shift from families growing their own food to needing to buy it meant that people were highly attuned to price changes on these necessities and more likely to engage in protest when they fluctuated.[153] Therefore, Jacobs's theory of "pocketbook politics" situates the Jewish women's actions as traditionally political due to their identities as consumer citizens seeking to change parts of the market, and it directly addresses the impact of food on the women's decision to take action.

Less explicitly related to the circumstances of the Jewish women explored here, but still important for understanding these protests and their place within general theoretical conceptualizations of mass action is Joshua Clover's book *Riot Strike Riot,* which provides a working definition of riots and explanation of their historical significance in terms of seeking to change terms of consumption.[154] Clover looks to understand the recent spate of riots around racial issues by interrogating historical and theoretical understandings of riots and strikes. Throughout history there has been a constant shifting between riot and strike as the dominant form of collective action with a general sense that there was a transition from riot to strike with the Industrial Revolution and then a return to riot at "the end of the United States' long twentieth century."[155] However, as actions of Jewish women in the first half of the twentieth century make clear, riots or at least events similar to riots occurred during the twentieth century as well. Clover does not actually discuss the Jewish women's protests, but his definition of riot and understanding of its importance further point to the significance of these actions within the

[152] Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 8, 39-40.
[153] Twarog, *Pocketbook Politics*, 42.
[154] Joshua Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot: The New Era of Uprisings*, (London: Verso, 2016).
[155] Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot*, 2-3, 17.

public sphere. Riots are not only violence, rather they are a form of collective action that simply put "is the setting of prices for market goods," which implies that all the consumer protests could be defined as riots.[156] And riots "comprising practices arrayed against threats to social reproduction, cannot be anything but political."[157] Therefore, though riots can and have often been historically viewed as mere violence and disorder or, in the case of the consumer protests, as merely hysterical and excited women, the scholarly work of Clover, along with Twarog and Jacobs, makes it undeniably clear that these events have significant political importance and ramifications.

The food protests of 1902, 1917, and 1935 can clearly be situated as feminine and domestic when looked at through the lens of early theorists, but also can be understood through the work of scholars who view such actions as a part of a public struggle for long term change. The women were described in terms of their domestic roles and stereotyped along lines that are negatively associated with femininity. Though the women took to the streets, they seemed to be turning that public space into an extension of their private sphere, albeit with slightly different behavior such as shrieking and property destruction. However, to only stop there with analysis of the protests ignores the fact that these riots, conducted by lower class, immigrant, Jewish women, can be defined as within the realm of traditional politics, thus going against ideas of the time that precluded such women from that realm of society. During the first half of the twentieth century, societal norms based on middle-class, white values typically expected women to aspire towards remaining out of the public sphere as docile, moral preservers of the home. However, the women

[156] Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot*, 15.
[157] Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot*, 47.

protesting broke such conventions of proper femininity through their actions in the streets, a most public area, echoing the break with ideas of where the protests fit in terms of politics.

These theoretical framings then allow for an understanding of the ways that the riots were interpreted by outside sources at the time, in this case newspapers. Articles from mainstream newspapers written in 1902, 1917 and 1935 tend to construct the motivations of the protesters as highly connected to the domestic realm of caring for one's family and the protesters themselves as stereotypically feminine; a characterization that restricts the women to the domestic sphere even as they are in public and constructs them as incapable of traditionally political action. At the same time, however, the newspapers also noted the women's non-feminine behavior and used descriptors rarely ascribed to women at the time, thus connecting them to that which is traditionally political, and at the time constructed as decidedly not feminine.

"Shrieking Women" Breaking a Beef Trust: The Kosher Beef Boycott

Aligning with notions of the protesters as outside the realm of traditional politics and connected to the private sphere, newspapers portrayed the women active in the 1902 Kosher Meat Boycott as deeply domestic and embodying negative aspects of femininity such as hysteria and excess of feeling. On May 16, 1902, *The New York Times* published an article about the first day of protesting on the Lower East Side which included the sentence: "Dozens of patrol wagons filled with howling, screaming women, bareheaded and carrying, in some instances, two children in their arms drew up at the Essex Market Police Court."[158] This sentence, with its descriptions of women as screaming and carrying children, exemplified and set the tone for the

[158] "Fierce Meat Riot on the Lower East Side," 3.

characterizations of Jewish women protesting about food prices to come. Though the women were in police wagons, a space not usually full of women at the time, they were still referred to in a manner that clearly asserted their femininity and domestic qualities. The screaming or hysterical woman is a characterization that has been used to belittle women's concerns throughout history and unfortunately has become a negative side of our collective notions of femininity. Similarly, childcare is one of the key pieces of domesticity and the idea that women were carrying children as they protested and were arrested fits into the domestic sphere even if it is occurring outside of the confines of the home.

The rest of the reporting on the kosher meat boycott continued to reinforce these ideas of simultaneous domesticity and excessive emotion through its descriptions of the protesters. On June 6, 1902, the *Princeton Union* described the protesters as a group of "some 3,000 excited women" and on May 23, 1902, the *Boston Globe* had a headline that described them as "shrieking women."[159] These two descriptors rely on emotional state to imply a lack of rational action and belittle the women. Additionally, the Anti-Beef Trust Association, a group consisting mostly of men, released a statement to the papers that "the committee desires to emphasize that the few instances of outbreaks on the part of some hysterical women are not instances of a prevalent condition of affairs," which explicitly diminished the women on the basis of a negative gender stereotype.[160] On May 18, the *New York Times* wrote that the women protesting in the Bronx, "all in white waists and black skirts," were shown by inquiry "to be married women with families," two descriptors that serve only to assert and, in some ways, judge the nature of the

[159] "New Development in Food Riots," *Princeton Union*, June 6, 1902; "Thousands in Meat Riots," *Boston Globe*, May 23, 1902.
[160] "Butcher's Appeal to Police for Protection," *New York Times*, May 26, 1902, 2.

femininity of the protesters rather than speak to their actions or goals.[161] Describing the women's clothes and marital status allowed the paper to put them back into the box of acceptable feminine characteristics rather than confronting the fact that they were stepping into the public sphere to protest. Also on May 18, the *New York Tribune* stated that "the women joked and hugged their children as they marched along," another characterization that connects the women more to ideas of proper femininity and motherhood than rabble-rousing and protesting.[162] The above descriptions of protesters are only a few examples of the many times that negative aspects of femininity or characteristics of domesticity were referenced in descriptions of the Kosher Meat Boycott as rhetorical strategies. The negative aspects of femininity were used to belittle the women and delegitimize their actions. The characteristics of domesticity positioned the women as belonging in the private sphere and unable to engage outside of it. Together, these two approaches created a tone within the newspaper articles in 1902 that refused to characterize the protesting women's actions as political.

At the same time as they situated the women in 1902 within the domestic sphere, the newspapers also described these protesting women, who were breaking gender norms merely by taking to the streets to enact change en masse, as engaging in behavior that was decidedly outside of the bounds of respectable femininity of the time. For example, the *New York Times* noted that on the first day of protesting, an evening "women's meeting was a sign for violence" that led to great disturbances, a concept which, by associating women directly with violence, goes against the notion of women as meek peacemakers that derived from Victorian morality. Likewise, on that same day police were stymied by women leading charges against them as they

[161] "Women Resume Riots Against Meat Shops."
[162] "Meat Riots Spread," *New York Tribune*, May 18, 1902.

did not want to hit women but needed to stop their behavior, leading to the eventual decision to hit the back of their legs rather than anywhere more sensitive, thus further demonstrating the dissonance between women and violence through their hesitation.[163] On May 17, the group of women protesting in the Bronx "threw meat that had been bought of kosher butchers in the street after they had taken it away from persons who had purchased it, [and] coaxed, inveigled, persuaded and forced intending purchasers not to buy," but when the police came and placed the leaders under arrest the paper claims that "the [other] women seemed to desire not to be too boisterous or masculine and they did not interfere."[164] In describing the action of women who did not interfere with the arrests as "not too boisterous or masculine," the article clearly implies that those who went against the police were in fact too far outside the norms of femininity. Likewise, women displayed many forms of unladylike behavior and took up a significant amount of public space on May 18, when "they slapped, punched and struck [a] man with various kinds of clubs until he ran away."[165] On May 22 and 23, women were described as further acting outside the confines of expected behavior by reversing gender norms of passivity and fear through "laugh[ing] at the fear of men in doing damage" during protests and getting injured attempting to protect their husbands from being arrested.[166] In Boston on May 22, a woman supposedly hit a customer leaving a butcher shop in the face several times with the piece of meat he had bought, a story that made it into multiple newspapers around the country, serving as clear evidence of the bold behavior of these women who had taken to the streets.[167] All of these newspaper depictions

[163] "Fierce Meat Riot on Lower East Side."
[164] "Women Resume Riots Against Meat Shops."
[165] "Meat Riots Spread."
[166] "Brooklyn Mob Loots Butcher Shops," *The New York Times*, May 23, 1902, 1; "Meat Riots Resumed in Brooklyn," *New York Times*, May 24, 1902.
[167] "'Kosher' Meat Riots in Boston," *New York Tribune*, May 23, 1902; "Meat Riots," *Alexandria Gazette*, May 23, 1902; "Kosher Meat Riots," *Indianapolis Journal*, May 23, 1902.

of the women active in 1902 represent them as un-feminine at the same time as they depict the ways that they entered the public sphere and engaged among themselves, with others in their community, and with their targets of butcher shops and police officers in a manner intended to make change. To the newspapers, these actions, which are more traditionally political, cemented the protesters as unladylike, though I would argue that womanhood for these women includes political action.

"Excited" Women Taking on the State Government: The Food Price Riots

Newspaper articles describing the 1917 protests continued to construct female protesters as highly domestic and negatively feminine in addition to ascribing the impetus and origins of the protests to outside forces rather than the female protesters themselves. This shift built on the idea of the women as emotional rather than rational to further imply that women were not capable of enacting complex protests. In an article on the first day of protesting in New York City, the *New York Times* reported that a woman who spoke in front of a community meeting about food price issues "became so excited that Dr. A. H. Freidman…gave her sedative and friends took her home," a description which ties into the negative views of women as too emotional for the decision making involved in complex protest planning.[168] The next day, the newspaper connected the protesting women to motherhood and childrearing by describing a march as "Four hundred East Side mothers, many carrying babies and all shouting 'We want food for our children!'" Those same mothers even said, through Ida Harris, to the Mayor's body guard that "We are not an organization. We haven't got any politics. We are mothers, and we want food for our children," a statement which fits into Kaplan's theory that women take action

[168] "Pushcarts Burned in Riots over Food," *New York Times*, February 20, 1917.

to keep their families alive rather than for direct political goals.[169] The statement may additionally be a negative reference to the women campaigning for suffrage in 1917 and an attempt on the part of these Jewish women to distance themselves from that struggle. On February 20, *The Sun* belittled the women's organizing and forethought by stating that "the women couldn't get in to their heads the intricacies of big business…[so] they did what other people have done in times of great stress. They gave way to their passions and concluded to smash and destroy."[170] Referencing stereotypes of women as incapable of complex thought and the notions that they were driven only by their emotions, the paper used the protester's femininity as a tool to limit the public's perceptions of their actions as legitimate.

Then, as the protests continued, the papers began to report on a supposed plot in which the Central Powers, the alliance led by Germany and Austria-Hungary during World War I, deposited $20,000 in a New York City bank account to be distributed as bribes to people to incite protests. These bribes were supposedly funneled through a New York dentist and given almost entirely to men. The plot was later found to be nonexistent, yet the fact that the papers and the public would latch onto it demonstrates their belief that other forces must have, or at least could have, been pushing the riots as opposed to them originating with the women themselves.[171] Similarly, the *New York Tribune* explicitly named a number of prominent socialist figures that they claimed to be "back of the food riots among the Jewish women of greater New York" on February 22, again implying a higher power at work in instigating the riots than 'just' housewives.[172] Together, the press coverage of the 1917 protests continued to delegitimize

[169] "Women in Bread Riot at Doors of City Hall."
[170] "Women Start Food Riots in Three Parts of City," *The Sun*, February 20, 1917.
[171] "Fund is Traced In Food Riot Plot," *New York Tribune*, February 24, 1917;
[172] "Socialists Aid Riots of Women."

female protesters through descriptions of their domesticity and femininity and also through suggestions that others were the true instigators of the riots.

In 1917, women simultaneously behaved outside the norms of femininity of the time and began to be more explicitly political. On February 20, five thousand women "fought like mad to get into Forward Hall…[where] the thousand that got into the hall fought for elbow room to shout denunciations of 'capitalism.'"[173] A large mass of women violently seeking to be included in asserting political beliefs that went against the mainstream was certainly not within the broader societal imaging of proper feminine behavior. Similarly, the group of women who went to the chicken market, destroyed a crate of chickens and ran "through the street, waving the heads and wings and mutilated bodies of chickens" were certainly operating outside the bounds of mainstream respectability.[174] On February 23rd, the *Evening World* described women engaging in pickets and attacking other women who purchased fish as "Amazonian," clearly an insult intended to emphasize their distance from proper femininity and turn readers against them.[175] Similarly, on February 24, the *New York Tribune* used highly militaristic language to describe the protests, stating that "the rank and file of the army of the poor which is attacking the high prices of food continued its warfare against pushcart peddlers, butchers, grocers in the congested districts of the city yesterday," even though at the time the military was closely associated with masculinity rather than femininity.[176] Thus, during the 1917 protests, the women became more explicitly political and continued to aggressively work towards their goals of lowered food prices. Their bold entries into the public sphere can be quite perfectly symbolized through the

[173] "Women in Uproar at a Food Meeting," *New York Times*, February 21, 1917.
[174] "Food Seizure by Commission, Governor's Plan," *New York Times*, February 23, 1917, 1.
[175] "Women are Attacked in Boycott on Fish; Many Arrests Made," *Evening World*, February 23, 1917, 2.
[176] "Women Continue Food Riots Here," *New York Tribune*, February 24, 1917: 5

story of nineteen-year-old Isabel Sorken who, during a protest geared towards getting a face-to-face address with the mayor, "was half way through a window opened from the Waldorf dining room when Patrolman Thomas Jordan, of the East Twenty-Second Street station, yanked her back to the sidewalk. Isabel punched the policeman in the mouth and was arrested by him on a charge of assault."[177]

"Militant Housewives:" The Food Price Protests

In 1935, the more traditional, non-political understandings of the protests moved away from notions of emotional femininity driving the action but continued to emphasize the domestic.[178] The focus however shifted from motherhood to being housewives and the appeals women made about feeding people were about the entire group of the "working classes" rather than their families specifically.[179] Being a housewife is still a stereotypically feminine role, but the shift that occurred both in the rhetoric of the protesters and the language of the newspapers may connect to the fact that the women were no longer immigrant mothers on the Lower East Side, but were increasingly assimilated Jewish women fitting into the American societal role of women as keepers of the home more broadly. Furthermore, the focus on identities as housewives connects to the notion of housewife as a role and mother as a state of being in a time when gender roles were of critical importance to understanding one's place in America.[180] Therefore,

[177] "Mob Storms Waldorf in Demand for Food," *New York Tribune*, February 25, 1917.
[178] Access to newspapers from 1935 is significantly more difficult than for those from 1902 and 1917. Therefore, the information about these protests draws more heavily from secondary sources and from a smaller pool of newspaper articles.
[179] "Boycott of High-Priced Meat Spread by Militant Housewives," *New York Times*, May 28, 1935, 27; John W. Harrington, "High Meat Prices Stir Wide Protest," *New York Times*, June 2, 1935, E10; "Housewives Demand a Food Inquiry," *New York Times*, June 21, 1935.
[180] Ann Folino White, *Plowed Under: Food Policy Protests and Performance in New Deal America,* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 2014), 125.

though the protest coverage in 1935 echoed earlier conceptions of the women, it also reflected period-specific changes in notions of womanhood.

At the same time, in 1935 there were fewer sensational accounts of actions like Isabel Sorken's, but nonetheless women were still portrayed as outside boundaries of acceptable behavior. The choice descriptor of the protesters was "militant housewives," thus, as in 1917, linking women with the masculine world of the military.[181] The women are also described as engaging in a strike rather than a riot, a term generally associated with more direct political goals rather than violence and chaos, as discussed by Joshua Clover.[182] That said, there are still a number of reports of women being arrested for attacking people who purchased meat in Brooklyn, showing a continuation of the violent, radical, and not particularly feminine tactics from both of the prior protests.[183] The women also referenced other earlier successful women-led protests and showed a high level of historical and political consciousness by holding "placards depicting the storming of the Bastille" as they picketed the offices of the large meat packers in New York City.[184] Furthermore, one cannot ignore the fact that the 1935 protests are the only ones in this study where women had the right to vote in the United States. Thus, their tactics in these protests must be read within a context of political engagement that can legally extend beyond the streets, a possibility that did not exist in 1902 and 1917. Indeed, though it is clear that between 1902 and 1935, many of the tactics of the women protesting remained the same, as did the fact that the newspapers characterized them as acting outside societal norms of femininity, their organization and explicit political intentions became far more advanced as time went on

[181] "Boycott of High Priced Meat Spread by Militant Housewives"
[182] "Meat Price Fight Will Go to Mayor"
[183] "Six are Arrested in Meat Boycott"
[184] "100 Picket Meat Plants," *New York Times*, June 15, 1935.

Ultimately, these elements suggest that the women were in fact purposely engaging within the public sphere, an idea that exists in tension with notions of the protests as highly domestic.

Women seeking to feed their hungry children fits into the most basic of domestic stereotypes. Women slapping policemen and setting meat on fire in the streets defies all sorts of norms of feminine behavior. Yet, both occurred during Jewish-American women's food-price protests in the first half of the twentieth century. On the one hand these events seem to fit into the theoretical conceptions of food riots that evoke tradition, moral economy, and a specific female consciousness drawn from acceptance of conservative gender roles. Newspaper reports support a conception of them as an extension of domesticity and the private sphere into otherwise public areas. This interpretation positions the protests as outside the boundaries of traditional politics and only seeking to resolve immediate issues. At the same time, the protests fit into a theoretical frame that posits women's actions of this sort as a deeply radical part of traditional politics, which in turn lines up with evidence from the newspapers that the women defied gender norms and truly entered the public sphere to work towards the long term systemic change typically associated with traditional politics.

These two distinct ways of conceptualizing the protests are both useful and both necessary, which makes a single understanding of these events and the Jewish women's behavior impossible. Jewish-American women, inspired by both their religious and social backgrounds and their American surroundings took to the streets to demand lower food prices. In doing so they both conformed to domestic expectations on the one hand and asserted a political voice and presence in the public sphere on the other. An understanding of Jewish-American womanhood must take both elements into account. As shown in Chapter One, Jewish-American women do not fit easily into a single box of womanhood. Instead the intersections of class, gender, religion,

and nationality create a complexity of identities. Likewise, Jewish-American women's protests show that their behavior is equally complex. Religion, class, location, societal values, and need to feed their families are all part of the impetus of food riots that defy singular classification as domestic or traditionally political. Instead, the women's behavior fits into both categories and in doing so further complicates notions of what it means to be a Jewish-American woman.

Consumer protests demonstrate that the actions of Jewish-American women do not fit into a singular category and Jewish cookbooks provide evidence of their complex identities, but Jewish-American children's literature fails to fully capture this history. Newspaper articles provide clear evidence of the women's actions, which seems to imply that they would become part of Jewish collective memory. However, the Jewish-American children's historical fiction that serves as the primary means of teaching Jewish children about their history presents a binary of female-characters that is untrue and incomplete. Though the consumer protesters behaved in ways that were both domestic and public, female characters in Jewish-American children's books are presented as sticking to either one sphere or the other.

Chapter Three

Domestic or Not: The Female Character Binary in Jewish-American Children's Historical Fiction Set in 1900-1950

Outside of typical scholarly texts, there are a number of ways to understand Jewish-American womanhood. The history of Jewish-American women is by no means isolated within the academy. Though historical cookbooks and newspaper articles provide valuable means of understanding constructions of Jewish-American womanhood during the first part of the twentieth century, their intended audience is somewhat limited. Thus, alternate forms of history are needed to share the past with current and future generations. Jewish-American children's historical fiction books, both picture books and novels, are a primary way that American children, both Jewish and not, learn about the time period explored in this study. Books about the first half of the twentieth century with female, Jewish protagonists have been on the market since Sydney Taylor's *All-of-a-Kind Family* series was first published in 1951.[185] In the intervening years, a significant number of such books have been published, detailing immigrant life during the early to mid-1900s. These books often tell the same story with minor variations in plot, date, or location, therefore providing Jewish- American children with a limited message about their female forebears.

Jewish-American children's historical fiction continuously reasserts the Lower East Side origin myth whereby all American Jews share a common history of escape from Eastern Europe to the Jewish cultural epicenter of the Lower East Side, a story that is decidedly not universal and rather untrue. These books also serve to teach the next generation of American children, Jewish and not, about Jewish culture and religion, which in this case is heavily informed by said origin

[185] Sydney Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family*, (New York: Follett, 1951).

myth. Additionally, within the framework of the Lower East Side origin myth, books such as *All-of-a-Kind Family* (1951)*, Rivka's First Thanksgiving* (2001)*, Dreams in the Golden Country* (1998) and *Call Me Ruth* (1982) assert a binary of female characters that oversimplifies Jewish-American womanhood.[186] In line with general trends across children's literature, this binary is typically found within the mother-daughter relationship, one tied closely to gender norms and therefore to food. Characters are either entirely domestic and tied to tradition or break with expected gender norms and identify as American which is shown through their actions such as cooking traditional foods and shopping versus acting in plays, starting strikes, and staying far away from the kitchen. Thus, while ostensibly promoting Jewish cultural and religious values and using the Lower East Side origin myth of American Judaism as a starting point and frame, these books also present a binary of Eastern-European female characters which obfuscates the historical reality that Jewish-American women in the early Twentieth century had complex identities and were both domestic and active in the public sphere as shown through the cookbooks and articles about consumer protests.

Lower East Side Origin Myth

In her book, *Lower East Side Memories,* Hasia Diner asserts that, during the period after World War Two, American Jews began actively constructing an origin myth of American Judaism that centered around the Lower East Side as a sacred space.[187] The Eastern European migration to America in the early twentieth century became the defining story of American

[186] Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family;* Elsa Okon Rael, *Rivka's First Thanksgiving*, (New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2001); Kathryn Lasky, *Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl, New York City, 1903,* (New York: Scholastic Inc, 1998); Marilyn Sachs, *Call Me Ruth*, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1982).
[187] Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*.

Jewish roots, despite the fact that many American Jews do not share that history. And, importantly, with the destruction of many sites of Jewish history in Europe due to World War Two, the Lower East Side became a tangible site for the remembrance of the origin story and for "Jewish authenticity in America, for a moment of time when undiluted Eastern-European Jewish culture throbbed in America."[188] Of course, this Jewish authenticity and, indeed, the entire origin myth are not necessarily historical truths. In the Lower East Side origin myth, as Diner has termed this narrative, all Jewish people came to America as poor Eastern European immigrants escaping religious persecution. They all ended up on the Lower East Side which was entirely Jewish and, importantly, they all eventually left the Lower East Side as a part of an upward trajectory towards Americanness and success.[189] However, as has been shown in Chapter One, even just within the category of Ashkenazi Jewish people, not all of them came from Eastern Europe and not all of them ended up on the Lower East Side, nor were all people on the Lower East Side Jewish. But, these historical realities do not diminish the effect of the Lower East Side origin myth on Jewish collective memory. The myth is part of a response to a perceived loss of Jewish cultural authenticity due to migration and a desire on the part of American Jews to understand how to be Jewish in a world where "personal success, bought at the price of Jewish coherence" defined their lives.[190] Thus, its salience derives from the function it plays in identity creation rather than the accuracy of its portrayal of the past and it has become an important element in the children's books that help Jewish-American children understand their religious and cultural identities.

[188] Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, 8, 13, 165-166.
[189] Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, 7, 20.
[190] Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, 2era6-27, 163, 182.

Indeed, the eight books examined as a part of this study all contain in some part of their narrative the Lower East Side origin myth and, by way of their audiences, pass it along to the next generation of American Jews. These books, which were selected from the Sydney Taylor Book Award winner's list and my personal library of Jewish children's literature, all contain female protagonists and are set between 1900 and 1950, although they were published between 1951 and 2013.[191] Despite the documented complexity of the American Jewish experience during this era and the different time settings, these books all follow roughly the same trajectory as the Lower East Side origin myth. The protagonist's family consists of immigrants: either the entire family comes to America or the parents immigrated before having children on American soil. There is some sort of struggle between Jewish 'old world' tradition and American modernity, occasionally leading to evidence of upward mobility. Most, though not all, of the books are set in the Lower East Side itself. As part of the origin myth, the Lower East Side has been constructed to stand for all Jewish communities around the United States, and therefore the concentration of books set in the neighborhood is not surprising, nor is the fact that the other places that the books are set seem to be nearly identical to the Lower East Side.[192] Though the source of conflict in the books occasionally changes, it is remarkable how consistent the origin myth story arc remains.

In particular, the *All-Of-A-Kind Family* series by Sydney Taylor, one of the books explored in this study, is viewed by many scholars as critical in the initial construction of said

[191] The Sydney Taylor Book Award is given by the Association of Jewish Libraries to "outstanding books for children and teens that authentically portray the Jewish experience." For a complete list of books included in this study along with brief descriptions see Appendix I. ("Sydney Taylor Book Award, *Association of Jewish Libraries*, http://jewishlibraries.org/content.php?page=Sydney_Taylor_Book_Award).
[192] Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, 31.

origin myth.[193] *All-Of-A-Kind Family*, the first book in the series, was published in 1951 and depicts a family with five daughters living on the Lower East Side in 1912.[194] It was the "first commercially published, widely distributed children's book with a Jewish subject" and set the tone for many later books.[195] Indeed, the distinctive experiences of "Mama's girls" as they are called early on in the first book, are shaped by the Lower East Side and in turn helped shape the sacrality of the Lower East Side in many more books to come.[196] The girls go shopping on Hester Street in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the Yiddish peddlers and celebrate Jewish holidays such as Shabbat and Sukkot.[197] These elements of their story allow Taylor to assert the importance of place and of Judaism in their lives. Indeed, because the books try to center and celebrate Judaism, the pressures of assimilation and conflict between Jewish tradition and American modernity are dealt with much less explicitly in *All-of-a-Kind Family* than in some of the later literature featuring Jewish young women on the Lower East Side. Hasia Diner has described the Lower East Side of *All-of-a-kind Family* as "an almost hermetically sealed world of Jewishness and love, [which] existed without contest over culture or generational conflict."[198] Yet, June Cummins argues that, alongside her celebration of Judaism, Taylor shows "an assimilative process that works, ultimately, to pull her characters slowly away from their traditional roots," thus in fact containing elements of that cultural contest which is so explicit elsewhere.[199] Due to centering of Christian characters and celebrations of American holidays

[193] Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family*.
[194] Lisa Marcus, "Dolling Up History: Fictions of Jewish American Girlhood," *Girlhood Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2012): 24.
[195] Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, 59.
[196] Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family*, 1; Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, 60.
[197] Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family*, 64-81, 166-175.
[198] Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, 65.
[199] June Cummins, "Becoming 'All-of-a-Kind' American: Sydney Taylor and Strategies of Assimilation," *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 27, no. 3 (2003): 324.

alongside the celebration of Jewish culture and the Lower East Side, Taylor both contributes to the Lower East Side origin myth and hints at the elements that eventually move Jews away from it.

Jewish Cultural and Religious Lessons

The *All-of-a-Kind Family* series, along with the other books in this study, are parts of a trend where Jewish children's literature serves as a means of teaching both Jewish and non-Jewish children about Jewish values and religion in addition to showing how to be an American Jew. Jonathan Krasner has found that the original Jewish-American children's books, *The Adventures of K'tonton* and *Hillel's Happy Holidays,* published in the 1930s and meant mostly for Jewish youth, provided "accessible archetypes of American Jewish acculturation" and explanation of religious beliefs and ritual.[200] Though these books have male protagonists and are written outside of the time frame of this project, their influence in terms of the purpose of Jewish-American children's literature remains salient. For example, Krasner notes that *The Adventures of K'tonton* "took the reader through the cycle of Jewish holidays," but also that "the Jewish values…stressed were humanistic and universal," thus emphasizing Jewish tradition and simultaneously proving to the reader that Jews could be good American citizens.[201] Likewise, much has been written about the way that *All-of-a-Kind Family* includes detailed explanations of Jewish holidays while also having a celebration of the Fourth of July that asserts the coexistence of Judaism and American identity.[202] Furthermore, *All-of-a-Kind Family* and the other books studied here often provide tangible lessons on Jewish history and religion. For example, my

[200] Jonathan Krasner, "A Recipe for American Jewish Integration: *The Adventures of K'tonton* and *Hillel's Happy Holidays," The Lion and the Unicorn*, 27, no. 3 (2003): 344.
[201] Krasner, "A Recipe for American Jewish Integration," 349-350.
[202] Cummins, "Becoming an 'All-of-a-Kind' American," 330-331.

personal understanding of the ways that Shabbat and Purim are observed come from the chapters in *All-of-a-Kind Family* devoted to those holidays.[203] Likewise, *Dreams in the Golden Country,* a Dear America Series book which reads as the diary of a young Jewish woman who emigrates from Russia with her two sisters and mother to join her father on the Lower East Side manages to include sections about factory labor, Yiddish theater, the labor movement, and broader American politics during the first part of the twentieth century, alongside many mentions of Jewish culture and tradition.[204] *All-of-a-Kind Family* and the other books explored here are necessary for perpetuating the Lower East Side origin myth and the trend of Jewish children's literature as an education tool about Jewish culture, religion, and history, serving to reify a certain story of American Jews while leaving out the narratives of others such as German or Sephardic Jews.

Private and Public: The Female Character Binary

The common narrative found within these books includes, beyond geographic journey and Jewish values, a specific binary of female characters that plays out in relation to food, home, and femininity. Female characters are either deeply invested in Jewish culture and religion, traditionally feminine, and highly domestic, or they are seeking to be American, defying gender norms, and rarely seen engaging with domesticity. The former characters are usually, but not always, the older generation of women, such as mothers and grandmothers, while the latter are usually the younger girls who serve as protagonists. The binary enforces, alongside the general history of the Lower East Side origin myth, a notion that Jewish-American women were either

[203] Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family,* 63-82, 91-95.
[204] Lasky, *Dreams in the Golden Country.*

domestic or engaging with the public sphere, leaving no room for the possibility that they could do both.

The binary within Jewish-American children's literature reflects collective memory of the past alongside the values and norms of the times in which the books were written. Though these books ostensibly reflect the expectations of womanhood between 1900 and 1950, their portrayals are colored by the dominant notions of gender norms and feminism during their times of publication. The existence of a female character binary evidences stereotyped notions of womanhood as domestic and tied to the home at the same time as it shows the desire of feminist authors to create female characters who rejected such expectations. Daughters are separated from the home because the women writing about them wanted to fully assert the rights of women to exist in the public sphere, however in doing so they erase the reality that daughters were and still may want to be domestic.

Often, the tensions inherent in this binary are located within the mother-daughter relationship, which has longstanding associations across children's literature with gender norms. Jane Agee writes about how mother-daughter relationships fit into the ways that children's literature "plays a part in the reproduction of stereotypical and narrowly defined gender roles."[205] She notes that often mothers serve as role models of and provide messages surrounding proper gendered behavior that has remained remarkably stable across time and is tied to "long-accepted cultural assumptions about who women are and what they are supposed to do with their lives."[206] She also describes the tensions inherent in mother-daughter relationships, including the ways that

[205] Jane M. Agee, "Mothers and Daughters: Gender-Role Socialization in Two Newbery Award Books," *Children's Literature in Education*, 24, no. 3 (1993): 165.
[206] Agee, "Mothers and Daughters," 165-166.

daughters both try to separate themselves from their mothers and emulate them.[207] This analysis, though positioned around children's novels more broadly, is relevant to Jewish-American literature which has a specific religious context but also is influenced by American norms more broadly.

Mothers: Keeping the Home and Maintaining Jewish Tradition in America

In these examples of Jewish-American children's literature, the mother characters are usually the female characters who are most closely tied to domesticity and the expected gender norms of femininity, therefore serving as markers for the roles that a grown-up woman plays. For example, in *All-of-a-Kind Family,* Mama explicitly models and teaches her daughters domestic skills, inventing a dusting game in which "the children were taught to be the best little housekeepers in the world," thus teaching both the sisters and the reader what is expected of women in terms of achievement.[208] The fact that her daughters have to engage in direct domestic actions is important to note as a product of the time when the book was written and the general expectations of girls in America in the 1950s. In the American Girl Doll Series about Rebecca (2009), a Jewish girl in New York in 1902, the first mention of her mother and grandmother in the series comes by way of these sentences: "Every Friday, Mama cooked and cleaned all day to prepare for the Sabbath. Bubbie, Rebecca's grandmother, came down from her apartment upstairs to help cook."[209] In this way, the two older women are clearly tied both to Jewish tradition and to proper womanhood through domesticity, leaving no other options open for their activities. Mothers in these books do not work outside of the home, which sets the tone that

[207] Agee, "Mothers and Daughters," 169.
[208] Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family*, 33.
[209] Jaqueline Dembar Greene, *Meet Rebecca*, (Middleton: American Girl, 2009), 3.

women are not expected to exist within the public sphere in a wage-earning context.[210] In fact, in most of the books the mothers rarely leave the explicitly domestic realm of the home except to go shopping which still falls within the domestic sphere more broadly. Sydney Taylor devotes a chapter to Mama taking the girls shopping which includes detailed description of the pushcart world of the Lower East Side, an oft described element of the origin myth.[211] Fran Weissenberg's *The Streets are Paved With Gold* (1990), though set ten years later in Brooklyn rather than the Lower East Side, contains an almost identical scene right down to the struggle of the children to decide what snacks to get.[212] Through an emphasis on characteristics commonly ascribed to femininity across religious and cultural backgrounds, the mother-daughter relationships in Jewish-American children's literature appear to continue to perpetuate gender norms in the same manner as American children's literature.

However, unlike the fully American mothers that Agee sees as representing the proper femininity that daughters will eventually achieve, the side of the binary that most Jewish mothers fit into is often closely tied to 'Old-World' Judaism. This aspect of the mothers' identity prevents their daughters from ever fully becoming them during the distancing and emulating process, as the younger women are always placed on a path towards assimilation that takes them away from tradition. Even in situations where daughters appreciate their mothers, it is tinged with the knowledge that they are still lacking elements of American identity that the daughters aspire towards. For example, Zippy in *Dreams in the Golden Country* oscillates between viewing her mother as traditional and restrictive and admiring the stances that her mother takes as

[210] Lasky, *Dreams in the Golden Country*.
[211] Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family,* 64-75.
[212] Fran Weissenberg, *The Streets are Paved with Gold*, (Tucson: Harbinger House, 1990), 21-23.

American and progressive. Her mother refuses to take off her wig, marking her as decidedly traditional and unlike Zippy's aspirations, but on the same page, she wants Zippy's father to become a sweatshop boss and make more money, a stance that Zippy wholeheartedly endorses and admires.[213] Similarly, Molly, in *Make a Wish, Molly* (1994), initially resents that her mother can't really speak English and maintains tradition such as wanting Molly to keep kosher for Passover and not eat a friend's birthday cake.[214] Eventually, though, Molly comes to realize that there is more to being smart than speaking English and appreciates her mother's help in dealing with mean girls in her class, ending the book by stating with admiration, "there was no one like my mama." However, it does not appear that Molly wishes to become her mama. Rather she is appreciating her despite her limitations such as not speaking English and making rugelach instead of pink frosted cake, an attitude of acceptance rather than aspiration that is shared by many of the younger female characters in these books.[215]

In fact, issues of food often create some of the most pronounced divisions between the two types of female characters in these texts. As discussed in Chapter One, many Jewish immigrants struggled over keeping kosher which is often played out in these texts either in terms of debates over the kosher laws or in the more watered-down context of traditional Jewish foods. These laws or specific foods are used as a means of demonstrating the traditional or old-fashioned values of the older women in contrast to the modernity of the younger generation. In *The Streets are Paved With Gold*, the protagonist Debbie forgoes her liver and rye sandwich and

[213] Orthodox Jewish married women often wear wigs when out in public in order to make it clear that they are married and supposedly to save their pure beauty for only their husbands. Many women who immigrated from Europe wore wigs and getting rid of one's wig was seen as a sign of Americanization and acculturation. Lasky, *Dreams in the Golden Country*, 123.
[214] Barbara Cohen, *Make a Wish Molly*, (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1994).
[215] Cohen, *Make a Wish Molly*.

instead goes hungry when invited to eat with the popular non-Jewish girls because of the way that the dish is a reminder of her immigrant, Jewish roots.[216] In *Rivka's First Thanksgiving*, a story about a young girl who learns about Thanksgiving in school and seeks to celebrate it, food becomes central in showing the tension between Jewish identity and American identity and its resolution.[217] The book begins with Rivka drawing a turkey in honor of Thanksgiving and having both her mother and grandmother mistake it for a "kotchka" (duck in Yiddish).[218] The use of Yiddish words combined with confusion over an American bird, and by extension an American holiday, draws attention to the way that these older women are connected to 'old-world' traditionalism and distanced from that which is American. Even by the end of the book when the family does host an American Thanksgiving dinner, Mama and Bubbeh prepare "turkey…sweet potatoes, salads, coleslaw, green beans, challah and mandel-brodt," while "Rivka, who'd gotten the recipe from her teacher [makes] cranberry sauce."[219] That the meal contains both traditionally American and traditionally Jewish foods speaks to the process of becoming Jewish-American and the ways that older women maintained Jewish tradition in the face of assimilation. Additionally, that Rivka had to get a recipe for cranberry sauce from her teacher, earlier introduced as an American woman, shows the ways in which Jewish mother figures were incapable of being all that their daughters sought to emulate.

The biggest sign of the distinction between the two types of female characters in these Jewish-American children's book is the amount of time that the character spends engaged in

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[216] Weissenberg, *The Streets are Paved With Gold*, 9-10.
[217] Rael, *Rivka's First Thanksgiving*.
[218] Rael, *Rivka's First Thanksgiving*, 2.
[219] Bubbeh (or Bubbie) is the Yiddish term for grandmother and is often included in these books as a means of asserting the traditional values etc. of the grandmother.
Rael, *Rivka's First Thanksgiving,* 24.

domestic labor, particularly in the kitchen. As mentioned above, the more traditional mother characters in this study are consistently tied to the home and kitchen, which aligns with the ways mothers are depicted across much of children's literature more broadly. Carolyn Daniel has written about how providing food is both part of the "good mother paradigm" and used by authors who "need a shortcut to representing the mother."[220] Likewise, in a study of popular picture books, Lisa Rowe Faustino finds that mothers are always portrayed as feeding their children, regardless of the rest of their activities, which serves to "reconstruct a cultural myth of the 'good mother' and ultimately serve to help reproduce her generation after generation."[221] Most of the Jewish mother characters fit into the category of "good mother" as even their activities outside of the home are explained as only domestic adjacent, such as shopping; there are certainly no Food Price Riots in the Lower East Side origin myth. In *All of a Kind Family*, even taking Mama to visit the library during a shopping trip is a special occasion.[222] Likewise, in *The Carp in the Bathtub* (1972), a book about a little girl who tries to rescue the carp that her mother will use to make gefilte fish from its inevitable fate, the mother character is only presented in terms of her cooking activities and abilities.[223] And in the *Rebecca* series, most discussion of her mother and Bubbie continues to center around their domestic activities, either preparing for Shabbat, cooking meals, or sewing.[224] These women are entirely defined by their domestic labor and, to the casual reader, have no life outside of it.

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[220] Carolyn Daniel, *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2006): 114
[221] Lisa Rowe Fraustino, "The Apple of Her Eye: The Mothering Ideology Fed By Best-selling Trade Picture Books," in *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*, ed. Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard (New York: Routledge, 2009), 71.
[222] Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family*, 65.
[223] Barbara Cohen, *The Carp in the Bathtub*, (Minneapolis: Kar-Ben Publishing, 1972).
[224] Greene, *Meet Rebecca*.

Daughters: Breaking Barriers and Becoming Americans

Meanwhile, the other half of the female Jewish character binary is defined in opposition to the first by lack of domestic labor. The modern characters who engage in behaviors outside of expected gender norms are usually the daughters and the protagonists of these books and at first glance one often does not even notice their lack of domesticity. Instead the reader is caught up in the main narrative being told, one which often precludes the girl from engaging with the domestic, such as Rivka confronting the Rabbis to be allowed to celebrate Thanksgiving or Rebecca putting on stoop shows and selling lacework to raise money to help bring her cousins over from Russia.[225] To an extent these stories appear progressive and even feminist at times. Roberta Seelinger Trites writes that feminist children's literature includes a "main character [who] is empowered regardless of gender," who has agency to make things happen, and often has a "triumph over whatever system or stricture was oppressing her."[226] She also adds that in the feminist children's novel, the female protagonist is not forced to socialize into traditional norms of femininity or lose her agency, instead "in the process of maintaining her personal strength, she often subverts traditional gender roles, playing on stereotypes and stretching their limits."[227] However, Trites fails to mention that in creating characters that subvert traditional gender roles, feminist authors often preclude their protagonists from any encounters with that which is domestic or traditionally feminine. This is evident in these books because though not all of the books in this study can be defined as completely feminist, the notion of female characters

[225] Rael, *Rivka's First Thanksgiving*; Greene, *Meet Rebecca*, 37-39, 50-52.
[226] Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), 4-6.
[227] Trites, *Waking Sleeping Beauty*, 11.

subverting traditional roles and maintaining agency by being completely separate from the domestic often occurs. In particular, these characteristics receive added emphasis in the context of Americanization and the assimilation tension that underlies the Lower East Side origin myth. Agency for Jewish-American girls seems to come from a lack of traditional gender norms such as domesticity and to some extent a distancing from Jewish tradition as well.

The most striking example of a Jewish-American children's book that fits the feminist mold is *Brave Girl* (2013) by Michelle Markel, a picture book about Clara Lemlich and the Garment Workers Strike of 1909.[228] Published in 2013, the book is the most recently written in this study and at first glance is incredibly progressive and feminist. Beginning with Lemlich's arrival as an immigrant on a steamship, the book documents her being hired in a garment factory because "No one will hire Clara's father. They will, however, hire Clara." It proceeds to detail the struggles of working in the garment industry and the fact that the men at the factory don't think that "the ladies are tough enough" for a strike which leads Clara to lead a number of smaller strikes. Finally, the story leads to the moment when Clara proposes the general strike at Cooper Union and the events of the Uprising of 20,000 itself. The book ends with the end of the strike and the sentence: "Proving that in America, wrongs can be righted, warriors can wear skirts and blouses and the bravest hearts may beat in girls only five feet tall."[229] It is evident even just from this last sentence that this book is seeking to subvert gender roles and inspire agency in young women by reinforcing the idea that anyone can make change including young girls.

[228] Michelle Markel, *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Maker's Strike of 1909*, (New York: Balzer+Bray, 2013).
[229] Markel, *Brave Girl*.

The entire book presents Clara as a brave role model and force of good in the face of evil such as the conditions in the garment factories. However, the book also falls directly into the Jewish-American children's literature female character binary trap. Clara is only presented in terms of her actions within the public sphere. The only mention of home and domesticity is the page where she is described as "fill[ing] her empty stomach with a single glass of milk" and "sleep[ing] only a few hours before rising again"[230] And her mother is never directly addressed apart from the section where Clara hides her bruises from striking from her parents. In this way, only the American, public, non-domestic part of Jewish-American womanhood is expressed in *Brave Girl*, which provides a positive role model for Jewish-American girls on the one hand, but fails to acknowledge the complexity of the history, including Clara's later actions as a food-price-protesting housewife, on the other.

Most of the protagonists in other books in this study are not as explicitly in the public sphere as Clara Lemlich, yet they still go against norms of domesticity in their process of Americanization. In Barbara Cohen's *The Carp in the Bathtub*, the female protagonist attempts to directly obstruct her mother's performance of domesticity by trying to prevent the killing of the carp meant for making gefilte fish. She expresses her agency by coming up with the plan to save Joe, the carp, and convincing her little brother to help her. Eventually, the fish does get killed and made into gefilte fish, but the protagonist maintains her distance from domesticity through the very end, stating that she is now an old lady and her "daughters buy gefiltefish in jars at the supermarket" but never providing evidence that she herself cooks.[231] Likewise, in *Dreams in the Golden Country*, Zippy and her sisters express a wide range of Jewish-American feminine

[230] Markel, *Brave Girl.*
[231] Cohen, *The Carp in the Bathtub*, 20, 48.

activity, except for engaging in domestic labor beyond helping their mother when required. Zippy attempts to become a Yiddish theater star, her sister Tova becomes heavily active in labor organizing, and her sister Miriam marries a non-Jewish man![232] Though much of Zippy's experience is physically centered around the home, the experiences of her and her sisters imply to the reader that in the process of becoming Jewish-American, girls were expected to become active in the public sphere and break the boundaries of acceptable behavior. Indeed, even though Miriam is at first mourned as though she is dead for marrying a non-Jew, one of the most heinous acts for a Jewish woman at the time, by the end of the novel she has reunited with the family, implying that even transgressions such as that can be forgiven in the Jewish-American context where Old-World tradition is often left behind to make way for that which is more American.[233] Rather than growing up to be their mothers, the young female protagonists of these books make a clear turn away from a domestic, food-centered version of womanhood.

The Exception that Proves the Rule: Call Me Ruth

Most of the books in this study perpetuate the domestic, traditional versus public, American binary of female characters by presenting mothers as the first half of the duo and daughters as the second. However, the book that perhaps proves the binary's existence the most, *Call Me Ruth* (1982), does so by essentially inverting the characters and their roles.[234] *Call Me Ruth* is told from the perspective of a young woman named Ruth who moves with her mother from a small village in Russia to join her father in America. From the beginning, Ruth's mother is portrayed as a failure in terms of domesticity. The grandmother does all the cooking when they

[232] Lasky, *Dreams in the Golden Country*.
[233] Lasky, *Dreams in the Golden Country*, 150-151.
[234] Sachs, *Call Me Ruth*.

live in Russia and her mother still fails to learn once in America, which ends up with a Thanksgiving dinner where "the chicken was burned, the stuffing tasted like straw, and the mashed potatoes were dry and lumpy."[235] Eventually Ruth's father dies and due to her mother's failure to cope, they move in with her Tanta (Aunt) Sadie's family. Tanta Sadie is the older female in the novel who fits into the traditional, domestic side of the binary as evidenced by the fact that "her house smelled of cleanliness and of good food cooking."[236] Meanwhile, Ruth's mother starts working in the garment industry and eventually joins a union, becoming heavily active in strikes including the Uprising of 20,000. She is therefore incredibly active in the public sphere and rarely at home, a sharp contrast to the other mothers in this study. Ruth, who aspires to be a good American woman, looks up to her Tanta Sadie and her teacher Miss Baxter rather than her mother. Miss Baxter is the epitome of a restrained American woman and seeks to foster Ruth's assimilation through statements such as "in some countries people are encouraged to speak boldly and to show all their feelings. But…, in this country, people respect good manners and good manners means self-control."[237] She is essentially telling Ruth to give up her Jewish tendencies and buy into the repressed habits of white, Christian Americans, advice that Ruth is more than happy to follow. By the end of the book, Ruth can see that other people appreciate her mother, but nonetheless she shows that her loyalty remains with her American role model rather than her Jewish one by wishing that she looked like Miss Baxter when people tell her that she will grow up to be beautiful like her mother.[238]

[235] Sachs, *Call Me Ruth*, 40.
[236] Sachs, *Call Me Ruth*, 51.
[237] Sachs, *Call Me Ruth*, 90.
[238] Sachs, *Call Me Ruth*, 127.

Call Me Ruth is a complicated narrative within the context of this project. Ruth is not a feminist protagonist according to Trite's criteria, as she seems happy to be silenced rather than assert her agency and she aspires to be like those characters that fit into the most traditional norms of femininity.[239] Furthermore, her extreme distancing from Judaism seems to contradict the part of Jewish children's literature that seeks to educate about Jewish culture. At the same time, Ruth's mother, Fanny, does assert her agency and her involvement in labor organizing provides a lesson about an important aspect of Jewish women's history. Therefore, by upending the standard structure of Jewish-American children's literature, this book in fact makes its existence all the more evident by demonstrating that there cannot be two gender-norm nonconforming female characters.

Jewish-American children's literature with female protagonists is much more than casual bedtime reading. It is a powerful tool through which ideas about Judaism, gender, and history are transmitted. These books continue the propagation of the Lower East Side origin myth version of Jewish-American history in which all Jewish-Americans share a common history of escape from Eastern-European poverty and persecution to the authentic Jewish cultural epicenter of the Lower East Side, and then, having achieved some level of economic and assimilatory success, leave it for the individualistic American suburbs. They also provide both Jewish and non-Jewish children with important lessons about elements of Jewish religion and history such as holiday observances and the labor movement. Most importantly, and negatively, these books propagate a false binary of Jewish-American women whereby half are deeply traditional and domestic and the other half strive to be American while rejecting gender norms. Books such as *All-of-a-Kind*

[239] Trites, *Waking Sleeping Beauty,* 4-6.

Family, *Rivka's First Thanksgiving*, *Dreams in the Golden Country,* and *The Carp in the Bathtub* place mothers in opposition to daughters, with the mothers never engaging in action outside the domestic sphere and the daughters primarily acting in the public, a contrast that plays out particularly through food. Even books that are supposedly ultra-feminist, such as *Brave Girl,* or include active mothers, such as *Call Me Ruth*, continue to promote this binary. Therefore, despite the fact that, as the previous two chapters have shown, Jewish-American women during the first half of the twentieth century had complex and intersectional identities and engaged in behavior that can be classified as both public and private, the current generation of Jewish-American children are reading and learning that they fit into only one box or the other. How can we hope to encourage the intersectional identities and complex actions of the Jewish-American women of the future if they do not see such things reflected in the past?

Conclusion

Despite the binary of female characters in Jewish-American children's literature, there is no simple way to define Jewish-American womanhood during the first half of the twentieth century. English language cookbooks written during the period evidence the multiple groups of Jewish-American women during the time and the various pressures put on them. Women were expected to use the home as a means to enforce and maintain dominant societal values which themselves changed over time. During the beginning of the century there were two main groups of Jewish-American women, those of German-Jewish descent and those of Eastern European-Jewish descent, who had corresponding cookbooks either geared toward interclass cultural transmission among the former or teaching the latter how to be good Americans. However, as time went on, the broader category of Jewish-American became more salient as cookbooks were geared towards maintaining Jewish traditions and values, such as the kosher laws, in the face of assimilation. All of these books together demonstrate the fact that Jewish-American women held differing and intersectional identities based on their class, gender, geographic origins, and religion, which precludes them from a single construction of womanhood.

Newspaper articles about consumer protests over food prices led by Jewish women further the argument that Jewish-American women are defined by complexity rather than uniformity. The actions of the protesters during the Kosher Meat Boycott of 1902, the Food Price Riots of 1917, and the food price protests in 1935 defy categorization as purely domestic and private or purely public and traditionally political. The women both framed their actions in terms of feeding their families, traditional gender roles, and immediate survival, and took to the streets, engaged in violent tactics, and interacted with big business and the government seeking long-term change. Therefore, these protests must be classified as both domestic and public, thereby

redefining the parameters of behavior that Jewish-American women engaged in during the first half of the twentieth century.

Unfortunately, Jewish-American children's historical fiction written about this time period fails to capture the complexity of these women's identities or actions. Books such as *All-of-a-Kind Family, Call Me Ruth, Rivka's First Thanksgiving,* and *Brave Girl* rely on a simplified narrative of Jewish immigration known as the Lower East Side origin myth that positions all Jews as Eastern-European immigrants who lived on the Lower East Side. They also present a binary of female characters between domestic and traditional and public and American. Most mother characters rarely leave the domestic sphere and most daughters rarely engage with it. These two elements, the base narrative and the character binary, mean that the books fail to accurately portray the history of Jewish-American women, thereby preventing current Jewish-American children from learning about the women's true complexity in terms of both identity and actions.

Though this paper begins to explore constructions of Jewish-American womanhood in the first half of the twentieth century, there are still many directions that further research could go including more in-depth looks at cookbooks and the inclusion of Holocaust studies. The sample of cookbooks selected for this study was relatively small and not representative in addition to only spanning fifty years. Also, the field of specifically Jewish cookbook studies is very small and open to expansion. Therefore, there are significant further research possibilities with regards to cookbooks and Jewish-American womanhood. A more representative sample of cookbooks published between 1900 and 1950 would allow for more conclusions about the intentions of cookbook authors. Likewise, an expansion of the time period of the sample would

allow for a further look at change over time. Kosher cookbooks disappeared in the 1960s and 1970s but made a resurgence in the 1990s and 2000s, which would be interesting to explore.

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper does not engage with the field of Holocaust scholarship which means that the impact of the Holocaust is not included in my analysis. However, the Holocaust had a huge impact on Jewish-Americans and further research on Jewish-American womanhood should take that impact into account. For example, how did the Holocaust affect the increase in Kosher cookbooks in the late 1940s and the desire to keep Judaism strong in America? Could Jewish women's organizing around issues related to the Holocaust be compared to their actions around food prices? Did the former protests inform the latter at all? Likewise, how did the tropes and binaries of Jewish-American children's literature change when authors began to write books that centered around narratives of immigration caused by the Holocaust rather than by pogroms?

The presence of food in all of these sources could also be more thoroughly explored, though it is mentioned to some extent in this paper. Jewish-American women are often stereotyped in ways that connect them to food such as the mother who overstuffs her family. Additionally, Judaism itself has a large component of both religious and cultural practice that revolves around food such as blessing and eating challah on Shabbat, keeping kosher, or merely eating bagels and lox on a Sunday. Therefore, texts about food serve as a critical jumping off point for breaking down stereotypes and simplifications about Jewish-American womanhood. The complexity of Jewish-American women's identities and actions and their change over time are mirrored by changing notions of Judaism with regards to food. Not all the cookbooks contain recipes for kosher recipes and even those that do so contain recipes with heavily American influences. Likewise, not all the women portrayed stuck with the gender norms of the old

country, or even those of the United States as seen in the actions of the food protesters. And, just as the children's books simplify Jewish women's identities and actions, they also include limited selections of Jewish dishes for their readers to learn about. Therefore, one cannot separate Jewish-American women from their food which means that these texts about food are the perfect sources for understanding their womanhood.

As a Jewish-American woman, I grew up reading many of the books in this study and eating many of the foods that they discussed. Every Yom Kippur I think about the clouds opening up to show angels in the sky and on Purim I wish that I could go visit relatives and bring them baskets of treats because that is what the girls in *All-of-a-Kind Family* thought and did. On Thanksgiving, my family talks about Rivka not the Pilgrims. I am proof of the way that Jewish-American children's literature affects Jewish-American young women. I loved characters that had the same religion as me and I learned almost everything I knew about Jewish history and culture from them. But, this means that my knowledge had huge gaps. The Jewish-American women presented in this paper are far more multi-faceted than the ones on the pages that I read. They are German and Eastern European, wealthy and poor, adherents to the kosher laws and proud shellfish-eaters. They hit policemen over the head with pieces of meat and carry their children with them as they protest. They are domestic and in the public sphere. They are Jewish and American. And most importantly, they are the kind of role models that the next generation of Jewish-American girls need. Jewish-American girls need to be told that they can do anything they want to do, but in a way that doesn't preclude them from baking challah or making sauerbraten. Too often feminist children's literature falls into the trap of reversing gender roles to the point where domesticity is erased, as for example in the portrayal of Clara Lemlich's story in *Brave Girl*. But Clara Lemlich did more than just start the Uprising of 20,000; she became a

mother and wife who organized huge protests literally from her kitchen. This is not to say that all Jewish-American girls must be domestic. Rather, there is a long history of complex Jewish women in the United States and children's literature must include all of them if we want our Jewish-American daughters to continue to change the world.

Appendix Children's Book Descriptions

I. Children's Books

All-of-a-Kind Family – Sydney Taylor

All-of-a-Kind Family tells the story of a family on the Lower East Side in 1912. There are five daughters in the family who at the start of the book are twelve, ten, eight, six and four. By the end of the story a baby brother is added to the family, but for the most part the narrative centers around these five Jewish-American girls and their experiences on the Lower East Side both secular and Jewish including visiting the library, dusting the house, and celebrating the Fourth of July, Purim, and Shabbat.

Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers Strike of 1909 – Michelle Markel

This book documents Clara Lemlich's life from her arrival in the United States until the end of the 1909 strike. She gets hired in a garment factory and also studies at the library. When the male union members doubt that women can strike, Clara begins to organize small strikes. Eventually, she is the one who suggests declaring a general strike at a mass meeting in 1909 and is very active on the pickets.

Call Me Ruth – Marilyn Sachs

Ruth and her mother leave Russia to join her father in the United States. Her mother is very unprepared for domestic life especially after her father passes away, so they move in with her aunt's family. All Ruth wants is to be a fully American girl and she uses her teachers as role models. Meanwhile her mother gets a job in a garment factory and becomes an active union member. She is arrested and upon her release is celebrated at a big gala. Ruth can see that others admire her mother's actions but she is never truly proud of her.

The Carp in the Bathtub – Barbara Cohen

The protagonist in *The Carp in the Bathtub* seeks to prevent a carp bought for gefilte fish from being killed. Her mother buys the carp a week before Passover and it lives in the bathtub. The protagonist and her brother name the fish Joe and become very attached to it, so when their mother is out shopping they carry it down to the bathtub of their neighbor as the first step in its rescue. They ask their father for help with the rest of the rescue, but he explains that their mother saved money for the fish and that it must be made into gefilte fish. Eventually, the fish is brought back to their house and made into gefilte fish, but the children are given a pet cat as a consolation.

Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl, New York City, 1903 – Kathryn Lasky

Dreams in the Golden Country is the fictionalized diary of a young woman, Zipporah Feldman. Spanning from September 1903 through March 1905, Zippy's diary covers her first year and a half in America, starting with the day that she gets off the boat from Russia. In that time, she learns English, discovers the Yiddish theater, has a sister who gets heavily involved in the labor movement, and another that marries a non-Jew. The book touches on many issues of

acculturation such as loss of tradition, differing ideas of how Zippy's father should make money, and the difficulties of catching up in school in a new language.

Make a Wish, Molly – Barbara Cohen

Molly is invited to a birthday party of a non-Jewish friend during Passover. Her mother tells her that she cannot eat the cake and she is very upset. At the party, she considers disobeying her mother, but decides not to eat the cake. Other girls at the party become very anti-Semitic when Molly refuses to eat the cake and she leaves distraught. At the end of the book, Molly's mother has made rugelach for Molly's birthday and even though she has not invited anyone over, some girls from her class come, bring her a present, and enjoy the rugelach.

Meet Rebecca – Jacqueline Dembar Greene

Meet Rebecca is the first book in the American Girl Doll series about Rebecca, a Jewish girl in 1904. Rebecca's cousins in Russia are in trouble and she spends most of the book trying to figure out ways to help fund their passage to the United States. She tries giving shows on the stoop but gets reprimanded. She makes the most money by helping her father in his shoe store and selling pieces of lacework to the customers.

Rivka's First Thanksgiving – Elsa Okon Rael

Rivka learns about Thanksgiving at school and decides that she wants to celebrate it. Her mother and grandmother are not sure that Jewish people can or should celebrate Thanksgiving. Rivka has to ask the rabbi if she can celebrate and is then made to ask her question to a whole panel of rabbis. Despite some resistance, eventually they decide that Jewish people can celebrate Thanksgiving and have a big Jewish-American feast.

The Streets Are Paved with Gold – Fran Weissenberg

Set in 1914, *The Streets are Paved with Gold* tells the story of Debbie, a Jewish eighth grader. Debbie becomes friendly with a non-Jewish, wealthy classmate while working on a project together, which introduces her to a whole new part of the world. She is also cast as the lead in the Mikado and gets her first boyfriend. However, Debbie's father gets ill due to his factory work requiring her to miss the play and her favorite aunt marries a non-Jewish man, both of which introduce tension into the story.

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