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Social Change and Creativity Change: How Creative Products and the Nature of Creativity Differ in Subsistence Ecologies with High Mortality and Commercial Ecologies with Low Mortality

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My theory of social change, cultural evolution, and human development is based on the contrast between two ecologies. One ecology consists of low-tech, isolated, subsistence-based villages with a few material resources, informal education at home, and a high mortality rate. The second

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ecology is high-tech, connected to the outside world, commerce-based, urban, relatively wealthy with school-based education, and a low mortality rate (Evers et al., 2021; Greenfield, 2009; Greenfield et al., 2021). Tönnies' (1887, Tönnies, 1957) term *Gemeinschaft* (community) summarizes the first type of ecology; his term *Gesellschaft* (society) summarizes the second type of ecology. The dominant direction of globalized social change moves communities and societies in the *Gesellschaft* direction.

Most relevant for present purposes, the theory posits that, as ecologies move from subsistence to commerce, definitions of creativity shift from community creativity where creative products are uniform in a community, communicate membership in the community, and are utilitarian to a concept of individual creativity where individual expression, variability, and innovation are valued. Thus there is a movement from creating products used for subsistence needs (e.g., pottery made for cooking vessels) to products that are simply expressive—art as we know it in our society (e.g., clay sculpture). Movement of an ecology in the opposite, *Gemeinschaft* direction will entail a shift in creativity back to producing more products that support subsistence needs. Evidence for these ideas will come from a Maya community in southern Mexico (Greenfield, 2004, 2005) and Ethiopian immigrants to Israel (Greenfield et al., 2019).

The Maya story is a story of endogenous ecological and creativity change within a community. The Ethiopian story is a story of parallel changes brought about by immigration into a new ecological context. The domain of creativity in the Maya context is the creation of woven and embroidered textiles. The domain of creativity in the Ethiopian context is the creation of clay pottery. In each case, the ecology has shifted from more *Gemeinschaft* to more *Gesellschaft*. As this occurred, the expression of creativity transitioned away from utilitarian products of a community—textiles with uniform patterns in the Maya case and utilitarian clay vessels of similar design in the Ethiopian case. The creativity shift in both cases is toward innovation and the expression of individuality—unique patterns in Maya weaving and innovative clay sculptures in Ethiopian pottery. I begin with the Maya story of endogenous change from subsistence and agriculture to money and commerce and how this ecological shift led to a new definition of creativity in woven and embroidered textile design. I then proceed to detail a parallel transition in the pottery of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel.

History of Creativity in a Maya Community in Chiapas, Mexico

Weaving Generations Together: Evolving Creativity in the Maya of Chiapas examines the impact of the economic transition from subsistence and agriculture to money and commerce on the transmission of weaving know-how, textile design, pattern representation, and the creative process of Zinacantec Maya weavers, following a large group of families in Chiapas, Mexico, over a period of almost 60 years (Greenfield, 2004, 2010, 2015; Maynard, Greenfield, & Childs, 2015; Maynard, Greenfield, Childs, & Weinstock, 2023). With the development of commerce, a relaxation of traditional “textile rules” and increasing innovation took place. Part of this process involved a shift in the definition of creativity from a community concept—in which the goal of clothing design was to demonstrate that the wearer was a member of the community—to an individual concept—in which the goal of clothing design was also to identify the wearer as a unique individual. Supporting this shift in the nature of creativity and textile design was a shift in the apprenticeship process. Learning to weave changed from a learning process carefully guided and modeled by the older generation, usually the mother, to one of more independent learning, trial-and-error experimentation, and peer input. In the third generation, weaving declined as a subsistence skill learned by all girls. While these changes all took place in one small village, the analysis sheds light on changes taking place all over the world, as the global economy develops and spreads.

In this chapter, I cover the period in the Zinacantec Maya community of Nabenchauk from 1948 to 2015. I will document a three-stage progression of changing creative processes in textile design: Phase 1 is community creativity, Phase 2 is family creativity, and Phase 3 is individual creativity.

Community Creativity

A model of community creativity was prevalent during the period of agriculture and subsistence (Greenfield, 2004); my earliest evidence comes from 1948. During the period of subsistence agriculture, there was one *bats'i* or “true” design for every item of clothing; and change was

minimal. Instead, interindividual and interfamilial similarity and constancy over time were universal in Zinacantán. I illustrate this with the female *huipil* or blouse. Figures 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, and 13.4 show a constant design from 1948 to 1971.



Fig. 13.1 Zinacotec woman's huipil or blouse, 1948. From the Petul Vasquez family. Collection of the author, UCLA. Photograph by Don Cole

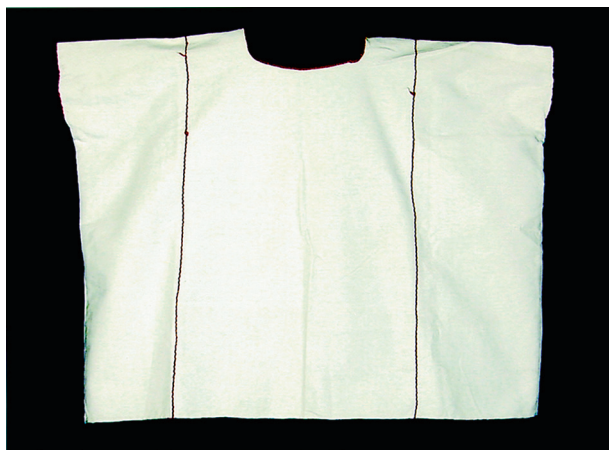


Fig. 13.2 Zinacotec woman's huipil or blouse, 1960. Museum of Us. Photograph courtesy of the Museum



Fig. 13.3 A Zinacantec girl from Nabenchauk wearing a huipil, 1966. Photograph courtesy of Frank Cancian

Family Creativity

To illustrate how the creative process changed over time, I begin with some case studies of textile design that took place in 1992 and 1993 (Greenfield, 2004), at a time when the transition from agriculture to commerce had already affected many families in Nabenchauk; both illustrate that the creative design process had a large familial component. In the first case study, a mother and daughter produce very similar blouses (Figs. 13.5 and 13.6). The mother says, “She showed me” (a literal



Fig. 13.4 Huipiles. Zinacantan Center, 1971. Photograph by Frank Cancian from *Another Place*. Reproduced courtesy of Frank Cancian

translation of the Tzotzil is “She gave me to see”). The daughter says of this blouse, “I taught my mother.”

In the second case study, one cousin designed and embroidered a huipil utilizing printed paper patterns (Fig. 13.7); she wore her new huipil to the Guadalupe fiesta in December 1992. Her mother, who does not use paper patterns, embroidered an almost identical huipil, albeit slightly simpler, in accord with the norms for an older woman; she wore her new huipil to the same fiesta (Fig. 13.8). There is little doubt but that she observed and copied her daughter’s huipil. A cousin also looked at the girl’s huipil and embroidered an almost identical one that she wore for the first time to a fiesta in May 1993 (Fig. 13.9). This is a process of



Fig. 13.5 Huipil embroidered by Lupa Z'us at the same time as her mother made the blouse shown in the next figure. Nabenchauk, 1993. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield



Fig. 13.6 Huipil embroidered by the mother of Lupa Z'us. Nabenchauk, 1993. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

family creativity, where a textile style identifies you not only as a member of a community—because the huipiles all follow the Zinacantec “rules” for huipil design—but also as a member of an extended or nuclear family, and the creative process involves interaction and mutual influence among family members. (A number of other case studies of family interaction



Fig. 13.7 Cousin Loxa's original version of the huipil made for the Guadalupe fiesta in December 1992. Acrylic. Photographed in Nabenchauk by Patricia Greenfield



Fig. 13.8 Loxa's mother's version of the huipil made for the December 1992 fiesta. Acrylic. Photographed in Nabenchauk by Patricia Greenfield

and influence in the design of huipiles are presented in Chap. 6 of *Weaving Generations* (Greenfield, 2004).) It is important to note that, in this model of creativity, copying is interpreted in a positive way as learning from other family members.



Fig. 13.9 Huipil made by Maruch, a teenage girl, for the May 1993 fiesta. Photographed in Nabenchauk by Patricia Greenfield

A Self-Directed Process of Creativity

Background. This is a case study of a young Zinacantec woman who has been helping me since she was nine years old (in 1991) and who is now my *comadre*. In 2003 she lost her husband with an eight-month-old baby. Moving back into her parents' and siblings' home, she turned to weaving as a way to support herself and her daughter as a single mother.

The multistep process. By August 2004, she had invented new styles which people wanted to buy. She told me proudly that no one else knows how, and she showed me a beautiful purple woven blouse with squares done in supplementary-weft brocade. Indeed, I had never seen a woven blouse with an overall pattern woven into it. This style of woven blouse took three weeks to make and cost 250–300 pesos (\$25–30), depending on size; I ordered one (Fig. 13.10).

But my huipil turned out to be a middle step in a very interesting new type of creative process—a self-directed one. And I now turn to describing the process that led up to and followed this woven blouse.

Eventually, Paxku' showed me a beautiful huipil she had embroidered in 2004 on store-bought cloth, the most common way of producing huipiles since my first visit to Nabenchauk in 1969 (Fig. 13.11). Its significance in this context is that she used this huipil as a model for the design in the woven huipil in Fig. 13.10.



Fig. 13.10 Huipil woven by Paxku' Pavlu. Acrylic. (24" high by 30 1/2" wide) Nabenchauk, 2004. Collection of the author, UCLA



Fig. 13.11 Huipil embroidered on store-bought cloth by Paxku' Pavlu. Acrylic. (24 1/2" high by 30" wide) Nabenchauk, 2004. Collected by the author in 2005



Fig. 13.12 First woven huipil, made by Paxku' Pavlu for her daughter Marielena, then one year old. Nabenchauk, 2004. Acrylic (12" high by 16" wide). Collection of the author, UCLA

After this embroidered model, she wove a huipil for her two-year-old daughter with a simpler pattern; she saw this as practice for the woven huipiles she planned to make for my student, Alethea Marti, then working in Nabenchauk, and myself (Fig. 13.12).

Paxku' was now ready to make the planned woven huipiles for Alethea and me (Fig. 13.10). Following my huipil, she varied the design of squares a bit and wove a gorgeous huipil for her daughter in the same color scheme (Fig. 13.13).

I wore my huipil to the book presentation in San Cristobal for *Weaving Generations* in September 2004. I was introduced by Pedro Meza, the President of Sna Jolobil, the Maya weavers' cooperative in San Cristobal. Pedro noticed and admired my huipil and wanted to know who had woven it. I introduced him to Paxku' and he invited her to become involved in Sna Jolobil. He ordered a huipil just like it, and I left my huipil with her so she could copy it. But after she delivered the first one, Pedro asked her to make subsequent versions in cotton, rather than the acrylic thread that was omnipresent in Zinacantec textiles. So Paxku' returned to practicing with small versions for Marielena; and she wove her first model in cotton thread, which she purchased from Sna Jolobil



Fig. 13.13 Woven huipil, made by Paxku' Pavlu for her daughter Marielena. Nabenchauk, 2004. Acrylic (15 3/4" high by 16 1/2" wide). Collection of the author, UCLA

(Fig. 13.14). (The cooperative wants their weavers to use the high-quality materials that they obtain for them.)

At that point, Paxku' was ready to weave her designs in cotton for Sna Jolobil. I saw her cotton huipiles in Sna Jolobil's store in San Cristobal in August 2005. I asked her to copy them for me and purchased two cotton huipiles, each in new colors and slightly varying in design (Figs. 13.15 and 13.16).

At around this same time, she began to design cotton woven bags for Sna Jolobil using related designs. She now had a sewing machine and learned to sew in zippers. I ordered one (left side, Fig. 13.17), which I got in the summer of 2005; Paxku' decided it was a little too small and made me a larger one, which she gave me as a gift in the summer of 2006 (right side, Fig. 13.17). This latter one uses exactly the same design as in the dark blue woven huipil (Fig. 13.16).

Note the essential difference from the family model of creativity I found in 1993. Whereas that process involved interaction and influence among family members, in 2004 and 2005, Paxku's process was entirely



Fig. 13.14 Marielena's cotton huipil, woven by her mother Paxku' Pavlu. Acrylic (13 1/2" high by 16 1/2" wide). Collected by the author in Nabenchauk, August 2005



Fig. 13.15 A copy of Paxku' Pavlu's cotton huipil woven in Nabenchauk for Sna Jolobil in 2005, woven by Paxku'. (24 1/2" high by 29" wide); collected by Patricia Greenfield in February 2006



Fig. 13.16 A copy of a second cotton huipil woven by Paxku' Pavlu in Nabenchauk for Sna Jolobil in 2005, woven by Paxku'. (25" high by 29 1/2" wide); collected by Patricia Greenfield in February 2006



Fig. 13.17 Cotton bags by Paxku' Pavlu, originally designed for Sna Jolobil. Red one (6 1/4" high by 7" wide) woven in Nabenchauk in 2005, and blue one (7 1/4" high by 7 1/4" wide) in 2006. Collection of author

self-directed. She transformed her own textile models rather than transforming those of another family member. This creative process was a much more independent one than what was typical a decade earlier. In line with my basic theoretical model, the increasing independence of the creative process was accompanied by increasing development of the commercial economy and the virtual disappearance of agricultural subsistence in Nabenchauk.

By 2015, weaving had become a casualty of the augmentation of opportunities for formal schooling (Maynard et al., in revision). However, we found one remaining weaver from our 1991 sample, Maruch Xulubte', who was still weaving; she was immersed in innovating new techniques. In doing this, she was simultaneously reaching back to combine these novel techniques with older design elements that had not been seen in decades. This combination of historical research with novel technique (illustrated in Fig. 13.18) was something that I had also seen in Pueblo pottery as it became specialized as an art form (Greenfield, 2004). Parallel



Fig. 13.18 Man's woven poncho (*pok' k'u'ul*). Woven and embroidered by Maruch Xulubte', Nabenchauk, 2015. Collected and photographed by the author. Note the innovation of embroidering with ribbon, highlighted in the detail close-up on the right. However, the background design goes back to the standardized poncho weave from the 1960s and even earlier (Greenfield, 2004)

to fine artists in the United States and other Western countries, weaving and embroidery had become more specialized art forms as they had declined as subsistence skills.

Conclusions

This research in a Maya community in Chiapas focuses on social change and how it affects the transmission of a weaving tradition, the definition of creativity, and the creative process itself. Social guidance and a community definition of creativity are adapted to a subsistence environment. Independent learning and innovation are adapted to an entrepreneurial commercial environment. The progression from a community model of creativity to a family model to an individual model took place as the subsistence economy was gradually replaced by a commercial one. These adaptations of creative models and learning styles to the economic and educational environment are applicable to textiles and the transmission of textile and other artistic traditions in many parts of the world. One example is the changes in clay sculptures created by Ethiopian immigrants to Israel, the subject of the next section. This common pattern is because all of these changes take place as adaptations to a changing economic and educational environment, an environment that, as in so many parts of the world, is inexorably moving in the *Gesellschaft* direction toward ever-greater commercialization and increasing educational opportunity.

Changing Creativity in the Immigration Process: Ethiopian Immigrants to Israel

A similar trajectory occurred for a group of seven potters who had immigrated to Israel as adults from small villages in Ethiopia. Like the study of multiple generations over time in Chiapas, the ecological change involved transitioning from a more *Gemeinschaft* environment to a more *Gesellschaft* environment. These immigrants moved from subsistence villages with no educational opportunity to the commercial environment of Israel, with a highly developed system of formal education. However, in

this second cultural case study, the transition happened through the immigration process and was more sudden. As in Chiapas, our qualitative interdisciplinary study of seven Ethiopian potters who immigrated to Israel as adults reveals both cultural continuity and change.

Continuity: African Values in the Sculptures

Analysis of cultural products (their clay sculptures) and interviews in Israel, in addition to archival photos at the time of immigration, reveal how these women carried traditional African values (procreation, family closeness, sharing, and respect for elders) and memories of subsistence activities to Israel. Many of the traditional African values are instantiated in Nsamenang's developmental theory of sociogenesis in Africa (Nsamenang, 1992; Nsamenang & Akum, 2013).

Socialization and African child development. Sociogenesis, in Nsamenang and Akum's view, consists of a sequence of socially expected behaviors. Chief among them is procreation and parenthood: A person is not considered a person if he or she is unable to have children (Nsamenang, 1992). The value of family closeness is instantiated in the practice of taking children everywhere, for example, to the farm, funeral, and religious ceremonies. Another facet of family closeness is the almost constant physical contact of baby with mother or other family caregivers. This is typical of infant care in rural African villages (Bakeman et al., 1990; Keller, 2007; Keller et al., 2005; Richman et al., 1992; Yovsi et al., 2009). Furthermore, full personhood requires marriage (Nsamenang, 1992). Sharing is another important value; even babies are primed to share, a quality that is extensively trained up until adulthood and binds the social system together (Nsamenang, 1992; Rabain, 1979). Socialization emphasizes the authority of elders (Nsamenang, 1992). All of these values and practices embody social interdependence.

"Training is pragmatic, apprentice-like in nature, and systematically 'graduates' children from one role position to another, until the assumption of adult roles" (Nsamenang, 1992, p. 148). Children carry out subsistence tasks, including obtaining supplies of water and firewood. Different tasks are assigned to boys and girls; this differentiation is an

indication of complementary (vs. egalitarian) gender roles (Manago, 2012). An important aspect is that this informal education takes place in the family environment.

These social responsibilities have important developmental meaning in the socialization process: "Child work is an indigenous mechanism for social integration and the core process by which children learn roles and skills" (Nsamenang, 1992, p. 156). Nsamenang further states: "Children are expected to observe roles or the performance of tasks" (Nsamenang, 1992, p. 150). Thus, observing and imitating adults are major mechanisms for informal education. These values and socialization practices are adaptive in rural, low-tech, subsistence-based agricultural environments (Greenfield, 2009; Kağitçibaşı, 1982). Indeed, the seven potters immigrated to Israel from subsistence-based ecologies in Ethiopia; most came from isolated rural villages where the learning environment focused on subsistence skills like making pots for cooking.

Change

The interviews and, to a lesser extent, the clay sculptures also reveal intergenerational shifts and an awareness of contrasting cultural values in Israel. Furthermore, we have documented spontaneous stylistic changes in the pottery in adaptation to the new environment. In Ethiopia, potters learned to work in clay by observing their mothers in an apprenticeship process. They have not been able to transmit pottery-making to their children or grandchildren in Israel because of changing ecological conditions and different cultural values.

Goals of the Research

An important goal of this research was to demonstrate that these subsistence practices, cultural values, and learning environments are depicted in women's art. This is a different sort of creativity analysis than was carried out in Zinacantán because it analyzes content as a reflection of cultural values. Nonetheless, like the research on textile design in Nabenchauk, this research is part of the tradition in cultural psychology

of using cultural products to identify and analyze cultural values (Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008; Uhls & Greenfield, 2011).

A closely related goal is to show a concordance between the artistic products, in which values are implicit, and responses to a set of standardized dilemmas, in which values are expressed more explicitly. We show, both through the visual art and through verbal responses to the dilemmas, that African values persist in Israel for these Ethiopian women.

However, there is an equally important thrust to our analysis: In coming to Israel, the women immigrated from poor, low-tech, subsistence-based villages with informal education at home into a diametrically opposed societal surround, one that is wealthy, commerce-based, urban, diverse, and technologically sophisticated, an ecology in which education takes place at school. Tönnies' (1887, Tönnies, 1957) term *Gemeinschaft* (community) summarizes the first type of ecology; his term *Gesellschaft* (society) summarizes the second type of ecology. That is to say, the seven potters emigrated from a *Gemeinschaft* environment in Ethiopia into a *Gesellschaft* environment in Israel. A different set of values and practices was adaptive in such an environment. Thus, another major goal of the present research is to highlight the contrasting, often conflicting, cultural values and practices that the women met in the broader Israeli society.

Values adapted to a *Gesellschaft* ecology are very different from those adapted to a *Gemeinschaft* ecology (Greenfield, 2009). They include gender equality (vs. complementarity), romantic relations (with de-emphasis of marriage), and a strong focus on personal independence (vs. familial interdependence) (Manago et al., 2014). *Gesellschaft*-adapted values are fostered by a learning environment in which formal education is very important. As a consequence, our research has another key goal, to show the participants' awareness of contrasting values in the society to which they immigrated and the resulting intergenerational shifts in the *Gesellschaft* direction that they have experienced with their children.

Nature of Creativity in the Two Ecologies

In a *Gemeinschaft* ecology, creativity is often expressed in utilitarian items, and designs are traditional. In the domain of textiles, for example,

we saw in Part 1 that woven and embroidered designs created for clothing were intended to identify the wearer as a member of the community, so clothing textiles were similar in design from person to person. As community ecology moved in the *Gesellschaft* direction, designs became more elaborated and individuated. This transformational process of textile design took place as a Maya community moved from a primarily subsistence ecology to an economy based on commerce and money (Greenfield, 2004). Our comparison of the current production of the Ethiopian Israeli potters with clay sculptures depicted in archival photographs from Ethiopia will illustrate this same principle.

Method

The Participants in Context

The seven participants, born and raised in Ethiopia, are all grandmothers in their 60 s, 70 s, and 80 s. Their histories, art, and values are part of a larger three-generation study that has demonstrated an intergenerational transformation of values from *Gemeinschaft*-adapted to *Gesellschaft*-adapted as the ecology shifted in each generation: from grandmother to daughter to granddaughter. Our seven participants have borne witness to these intergenerational changes.

They are part of a large population of Ethiopian citizens of Israel, also called Beta Israel in Hebrew, House of Israel. Their community developed and lived for centuries in the area of the Kingdom of Aksumand, the Ethiopian Empire, which is currently divided between the Amhara and Tigray regions. These regions are in northern and northwestern Ethiopia, in more than 500 small Jewish villages spread over a wide territory, alongside populations that were Muslim and Christian, the predominant faith. Most Ethiopian Jews were concentrated in the area around and to the north of Lake Tana in the Gondar region and spoke Amharic (Kaplan & Salamon, 2004; Quirin, 1992; Salamon, 2003). The remaining members of Beta Israel were Tigre; they lived in the Tigray region and spoke Tigrinya.

Ethiopian Jews consider themselves descendants of the Dan tribe of ancient Israel. “Many longed to move to Israel for religious reasons; others [emigrated] because of poor living conditions and oppression in their home country” (Resnick, in Greenfield, 2016, p. 1). Unfortunately, they experienced racial prejudice upon their arrival in Israel, which caused severe disillusionment (interview with the head of an Ethiopian community organization, July 2014). By the end of 2017, there were 148,700 people of Ethiopian descent in Israel; including 87,000 people born in Ethiopia and about 61,700 native-born Israelis (about 41% of the community) (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

One could consider these women and the Ethiopian community in Israel as part of the African diaspora (see, e.g., Tchombe & Mbangwana, 2013). However, that was not their intention when they emigrated. Instead, they saw themselves as making *aliyah*, meaning “going up” in Hebrew and the word for return to Israel, considered as the homeland. Indeed, the longing to go to Israel had been present for generations, even before the establishment of the State of Israel.

Six of the seven participants created pottery several times a week in the Ethiopian Jewish Arts Workshop in Be’er Sheva, Israel, where all the participants live. The seventh practiced pottery in Ethiopia before immigrating to Israel. As participants in the research, the artists were promised anonymity; and we preserve this anonymity in reporting the research interviews. However, it would not be ethical to present their artistic products anonymously. Different ethics apply in psychological science and art. In addition all of the photographs of the clay sculptures in this chapter, identified with the names of their makers, have already been published as part of a brochure/catalog (Greenfield, 2016) when the works were shown in exhibitions in Los Angeles. Hence this is public information. The photographs of clay sculptures in this chapter contain the same identifying information as in Greenfield (2016). While quotes from the anonymous interviews represent all seven participants, only three have sculptures pictured in this chapter. Hence, it is impossible to associate a specific participant with a specific quote.

Four of the participants (Nos. 14, 18, 25, and 31) came to Israel in the 1980s via Sudan. We know that at least two of the four came with

Operation Moses, which took place in 1984 and 1985. Operation Moses involved the air transport of about 8000 Ethiopian Jews from Sudan, where they had survived an arduous journey by foot and were living in refugee camps. More than 4000 had died along the way (BenEzer, 1995). One of the potters lost her sisters and her oldest son in Sudan. The remaining three potters (Nos. 12, 16, and 23) came to Israel with Operation Solomon in 1991. In Operation Solomon, 14,325 Ethiopian Jews from the Gondar region were airlifted to Israel from Addis Ababa after undertaking a dangerous journey of hundreds of miles by car, horse, and foot (Ayalen, 1992).

Six of the seven participants are Amharic speaking, the official language of Ethiopia. One speaks Tigrinya, a language spoken in Tigre, at the northern tip of Ethiopia, and in Eritrea. All of the artists dress in long Ethiopian-style dresses, confirming the continuity of their African cultural identity in the Israeli surround.

All interviewees live in peripheral, low-economic neighborhoods in Be'er Sheva with a high percentage of Ethiopian immigrants. Some live in apartment buildings that used to be "reception centers" when they arrived in Israel. Some describe some familiarity with non-Ethiopian Israelis. However, connections are usually institutional—with welfare, medical, and educational agencies—or through their children, some of whom have become well-versed in Israeli culture. Others feel isolated from the broader Israeli community: No. 18 said, "*Me, with me, there are no Israelis, Ethiopians alone, alone in [their houses] ... I have two whites (in my building) I have a neighbor (do you know them?) They are not at home, [they are] working.*"

All of the participants were informally educated at home in Ethiopia; their education revolved around subsistence tasks like preparing food and making pots; none had the opportunity to go to school. Most of the participants (Nos. 12, 16, 18, 25, and 31) made functional pots in Ethiopia, but not statues. Only one participant (No. 23) had an art teacher who taught her how to make the kind of figurines she is now making in Israel. One participant (No. 14) did not work with clay in Ethiopia.

Data Sources

Selection of the Sculptures

In the summer of 2016, Michael Hittleman and Patricia Greenfield selected pieces from the Ethiopian Clay Workshop for two shows in Los Angeles. Because this was our corpus for the analysis of the sculptures, the principles behind the selection are important; they indicate the cultural and psychological inferences that can be drawn. The first principle was aesthetic: to select the most beautiful and well-made sculptures. The second principle was to select a variety of content, not to repeat themes. In fact, there was, and continues to be, a tremendous repetition of key themes. Because of this principle, the selection can be considered quite comprehensive thematically. However, because many of the artists overlapped in depicting major themes, it would not be meaningful to try to associate value themes with artists. Instead, it is more meaningful to consider the themes as a group production.

Results

Subsistence Practices at the Time of Emigration

Figures 13.19 and 13.20 show women's subsistence practices—in the Jewish community of Wallaka in Gondar in the 1980s. This is about the time of Project Moses which brought most of our artists to Israel as young to middle-aged adults, well past the developmental period in which cultural values are established (Minoura, 1992). Specifically, Fig. 13.20 shows an Ethiopian Jewish woman shaping a pot in 1983 in a village near Gondar. Six of the seven participants worked in clay in Ethiopia. In their villages, they made functional items used for subsistence, such as bowls. In line with African values, subsistence activities were gendered: one artist told us that only women worked in clay.

One of the artists (No. 23) turned from practical items to making figurines for sale when her husband left her and she needed money. She learned this skill from a private art teacher from the capital. One sees here a connection between commercialization and creating an item that is not



Fig. 13.19 Beta Israel woman winnowing grain, Wallaka, Ethiopia, 1984. Photo: Doron Bacher. The Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot, The Oster Visual Documentation Center

functional for the community, but is for sale to outsiders. Greenfield (2004) found this same connection with weaving in a Maya community in transition to a commercial economy. From Fig. 13.21, it is clear that the clay artist in our study was not alone in creating figurines to sell in the market in Wallaka.

Continuity and Change in Clay Sculpture

However, the tradition of making clay figurines was not a new one, as can be seen from a collection of clay figurines (see Fig. 13.22) from the 1960s, two decades earlier. What is perhaps most interesting is that the themes depicted here are also present in the current work of the Ethiopian Jewish Arts Workshop: pounding wheat (Fig. 13.30), couple embracing (Fig. 13.32), babies in both arms (Fig. 13.23), and even a pregnant



Fig. 13.20 Jewish woman making pottery in a village, 20 km from Gondar (Lake Tana), on the road to Dabat, Ethiopia, April 1983. Photo: Sandro Carabelli, Italy. The Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot, The Oster Visual Documentation Center, courtesy of S. Carabelli

woman with a necklace and a high neck decoration (Fig. 13.24). Hence, the artists are not only depicting life as they remember it in Ethiopia; they are also continuing artistic depictions that originated in Ethiopia.

What is equally clear is that the themes are now executed in a more complex and differentiated way (compare Fig. 13.22 with Figs. 13.23, 13.24, 13.30, and 13.32). This process occurred spontaneously, with no input from Workshop personnel. That is, there are no “teachers.” A striking example is rabbi figures made in the 1980s (Fig. 13.25) compared with those made in the Ethiopian Jewish Arts Workshop in Israel (Figs. 13.26, 13.27, and 13.29).

Specifically, the rabbi figures made in the workshop are more differentiated and elaborated, compared with similar figures seen being fired in



Fig. 13.21 Beta Israel members selling clay artifacts in the local market, Wallaka, Gondar Region, Ethiopia, 1984. Photo: Doron Bacher. The Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot, The Oster Visual Documentation Center

Ethiopia in Fig. 13.25. According to Greenfield's theory and research, individuation is part of the culture change that occurs in the shift from a *Gemeinschaft* to a *Gesellschaft* ecology, where subsistence tasks are less arduous and artists or artisans have more time to devote to their work (Greenfield, 2004, 2009).

However, in Israel, the focus on productive activity was different from the very beginning. High-tech skills, a characteristic of a *Gesellschaft* ecology, were emphasized. From the time of their arrival in Israel, this was the kind of education their children, the second generation, were going to receive. Figure 13.28 shows an Ethiopian boy learning computer skills in the 1980s.

At the same time, skills with a subsistence origin were devalued. One of the artists, who had been in the workshop for 25 years, said that they had started with 57 members, but many found work, and the group dissipated. Clearly by work, she meant paid work, and this definition of



Fig. 13.22 Pottery figurines made by Beta Israel women, Wallaka, Ethiopia, 1960s. Photo: Ya'akov Brill. The Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot, The Oster Visual Documentation Center, courtesy of Harel family

work signals the transition into a more commercial economic environment, intrinsic to a *Gesellschaft* ecology (Greenfield, 2009). By 2016, the group comprised only six women; in addition to work, death had taken others.

Depiction of Education in the Family and Respect for the Authority of Elders

One important feature of the learning environment in African villages and in *Gemeinschaft* ecologies more generally is that education takes place in the family. An example of a specific learning environment instantiating this sociodemographic feature is found in Mamit Sheto's statue that she describes as "*Rabbi reading the Torah, with grandson listening*" (Fig. 13.29). A value that is consonant with this practice is respect for the expertise of the older generation (Greenfield, 2004; Keller, 2007). The



Fig. 13.23 Mother with babes in both arms. By Adiseh Baruch, 2016. (Dates here and in subsequent slides are dates of purchase. Date of creation is not known.) Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

fact that the artist constructs the grandson as listening embodies both the grandson as learning from his grandfather and the grandson's respect for a teacher who is an older authority in the family.

A Gendered Learning Environment Reflects Gendered Subsistence Roles

Gender roles were ascribed by birth. When asked what her brothers did, Participant #16 replied: "*They plowed like their father.*" Participant No. 14 said: "*In Ethiopia, dad goes to work, and his son watches him. The daughter also watches her mother.*" For women, education at home centered on



Fig. 13.24 Pregnant woman with a necklace and a high neck decoration. Unknown artist, 2016. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

learning the subsistence practices allocated to females, such as food preparation and pottery. In response to the question “*What would you do when you were a little girl?*” participant No. 12 described her learning environment: “*My stepmother would give me house tasks, and I would do them (like preparing food for example)... She would let me grind the flour.... I dealt with pottery. I made clay pots and everything that had to do with clay.*” In line with the allocation of food preparation to females, all of the statues that show food preparation are female figures such as Fig. 13.30.



Fig. 13.25 Baking clay rabbi figurines, Wallaka, Gondar Region, Ethiopia, 1984. The Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot, The Oster Visual Documentation Center

Gender Roles: Social Change and Persistence

However, the role of preparing food and doing housework ascribed to women by birth was no longer so adaptive in the Israeli environment where women were joining men in working outside the home. Recall that our interview included cultural dilemmas occurring because of sociodemographic shifts; conflict concerning gender roles was the theme of one of the dilemmas. In each dilemma one character advocates for a *Gemeinschaft*-adapted perspective and a second character advocates for a *Gesellschaft*-adapted perspective; the participant must decide who is right.

Here is a social dilemma that pits food preparation and other household tasks as a female obligation, ascribed by birth (*Gemeinschaft* perspective) against equivalent gender roles for males and females (*Gesellschaft* perspective):



Fig. 13.26 Kes (Ethiopian rabbi) with Torah. By Adiseh Baruch, 2016. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

Orit (Admalash) and Yossi (Takla) are a married couple. They have three children. Orit works outside the house every day until five o'clock. Orit expects Yossi to help her with the various housework (preparing lunch, washing dishes, cleaning the floor, etc.), but Yossi refuses and says that these are not the work of a man and that she should do them. Who is right, Orit or Yossi? Why?

One of the potters took the *Gemeinschaft* perspective—that the woman is responsible for the subsistence task of feeding the family. However, two of the participants understood the social change going on as a result of the immigration process. Participant No. 31's response shows an understanding of the difference between Ethiopia's strictly ascribed gender roles and Israel's role equivalency between men and women. Participant No.



Fig. 13.27 Kes (Ethiopian rabbi) bringing home sheep. By Adiseh Baruch, 2016. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

31 begins by saying that Yossi is right because a man will work outside. In contrast, a woman “*would take care of the children, and cook at breakfast, dinner... This is our law, our community.*” But on further probing, this same participant talks about one of her sons and his wife in Israel: “*My son..., his wife works and he works. He bathes the children, puts them to sleep, gives them food; and she cooks and does other things. Help each other.*” The interviewers further probed the difference between Ethiopia and Israel. Participant No. 31 summed it up by saying, “[In] *our community it is forbidden. But here everything is permitted.*” Here she is articulating the difference between strong norms, adaptive in a *Gemeinschaft* ecology, particularly where there is resource scarcity (Gelfand et al., 2011), and the importance of choice and alternatives that are important values in

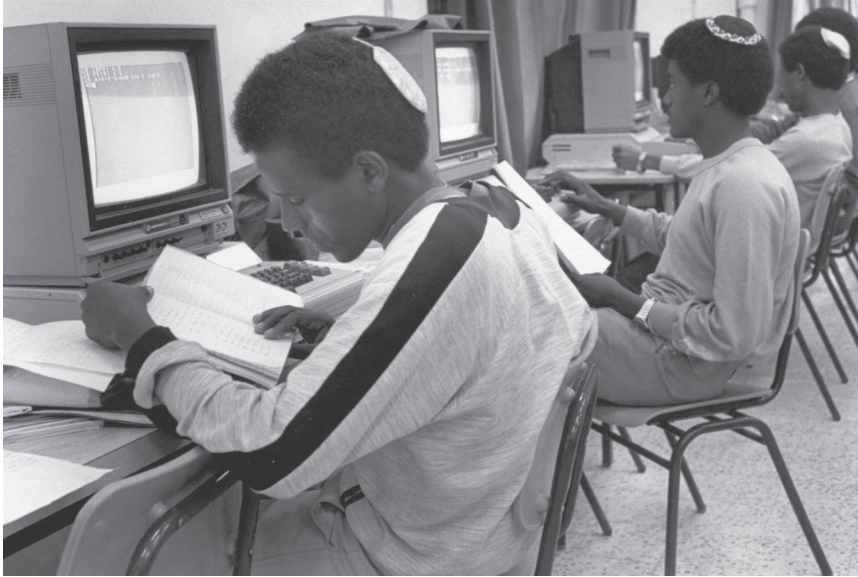


Fig. 13.28 Pupils from Ethiopia studying computers in “Mikvah Israel” Agricultural High School, Israel, March 1986, Photo: Doron Bacher. The Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot, The Oster Visual Documentation Center

wealthier, more highly educated Gesellschaft ecologies (Greenfield, 2009; Stephens et al., 2007).

Participant No. 23 also articulated this difference between Ethiopia and Israel: “*Once, when we were in Ethiopia, men did not do housework. But in Israel, the man also works at home. I have a son who does laundry, . . . takes care of the children, gives them food.*” She evaluated the change positively: “*Basically this is good.*”

Participant No. 14 understands this same difference in gender roles between Ethiopia and Israel. However, she evaluated it as: “*Not good, not good, not good.*” She says:

There are many men in Israel, it's hard for them. . . they go to work, come back home, have kids at home, (now she is imitating a commanding feminine voice) Clean! Cook! Prepare! Wash it! Wash the floor! What can I tell you, bring



Fig. 13.29 Rabbi reading Torah, grandson listening. By Mamit Sheto, Ethiopian Jewish Arts Workshop, Be'er Sheva, Israel, 2016. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

the plate and clean it! Wash the child! Feed the child! The husband doesn't rest. Not resting. Not resting is difficult, it is not easy. It's not easy. But people will hate me..... (Laughs).

It is clear that she realizes that her views are countercultural in the Israeli context.

Finally, yet importantly, one artist (No. 16) took the *Gesellschaft* perspective and said that the woman is right, thus displaying a value that she could most likely not have endorsed in Ethiopia. Perhaps this awareness of radical differences in the two environments is the reason for, in Israel, a sense of disruption of intergenerational transmission. Undoubtedly, these women are aware that their subsistence skills are not adapted to the



Fig. 13.30 Pounding wheat to separate it from the chaff. By Tziona Yahim, Ethiopian Jewish Arts Workshop, Be'er Sheva, Israel, 2016. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

Gesellschaft world of Israel. Yet the broader Israeli community does not consider women's production of clay sculpture to be art.

Changing Patterns of Education, Work, and Life

When asked "What is important to you to pass on to future generations?" participant #12 replied: "*What can I tell them, they live their life.*" Her intonation expresses that she realizes she is not relevant to how they live their life. This realization is because education and work have been radically transformed. Focusing on education, participant No. 18 said: "*My children, grandchildren will learn, will know, not like me. I do not learn; I do not know how to speak; I cannot read. Learn, do well I will tell them.*"

Participant No. 14 described the loss of value of parents as educational role models and the physical separation of emerging adult children from their parents. As stated above, she said: “*In Ethiopia, dad goes to work and his son watches him and learns what he is doing. The daughter also watches her mother.*” But she went on to contrast this form of education with how things work in Israel:

Here in Israel, from the age of three months you put [him] in kindergarten. And what does he learn from his parents? When he grows up, he goes to university; he does not stay with his parents. This is a problem.

The description of learning in Ethiopia also highlights the importance of observation in informal education in Gemeinschaft ecologies (Greenfield, 2004; Nsamenang, 1992; Rogoff, 2014).

The devaluation of subsistence skills in Israel and the value placed upon wage work and formal education is very painful for these women and compounds the loneliness of losing physical closeness with children and grandchildren. Participant No. 14 continued:

I did not work in Israel. If I were a worker I would be a person. ...If I were a worker I would be bus driver, [I would work in] an office....I know [how] to read very little. I studied with the children. No one taught me. ...It's hard for me. My heart aches. Time has gone, 35 years gone. The children, everyone in his house, left alone. Hard for me.

She has concluded that, in Israel, one must work for money to be considered a person and therefore feel like a person.

Racial Prejudice Complicates Cultural Loss and Acculturation to a New Ecology and Set of Cultural Values

The Ethiopian Jews have encountered deep racial prejudice in Israel, including humiliating conversion requirements despite their ancient Jewish roots (Gal, 2003; Mekelberg, 2015). Participant No. 14 spoke about discrimination against the next generation, the children of Ethiopian immigrants: “*The children find it difficult in the Land of Israel....If a child makes a mistake, they put him in jail; they abuse them in school, even in the army; they discriminate*

against them, they abuse them.” Participant No. 31 had the following perspective: “*Some hate us because we are black. The country is good, the government is good, but there are lower levels that do not allow integration.*” Racism and discrimination have greatly compounded the difficulties of culture loss and adapting to a new ecology and set of cultural values.

Other African Values and their Israeli Transformations

Procreation

As in other *Gemeinschaft* ecologies, large families and fertility were very much valued in Ethiopia (Dyer, 2007; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Figure 13.31 depicts a statue of a pregnant woman with a baby on her



Fig. 13.31 Pregnant woman with baby on her back. By Mamit Sheto, Ethiopian Jewish Arts Workshop, Be'er Sheva, Israel, 2019. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

back. Clearly, the two children will be spaced closely together. Equally important is the expression of physical closeness between mother and child, exemplified by the positioning of the baby on the mother's back, a very common depiction by the Workshop artists.

The value of procreation was made explicit in the responses to the following scenario:

Rina Solomon, 30, is studying for a master's degree at Ben Gurion University. Rina has been dating Reuven for several years and they do not intend to marry in the short term. Rina says they will marry when they want to have children and she wants to have children only after she finishes her degree. Rina's mother pleads with Rina to get married and raise a family. She says Rina is an adult and a family is the most important thing, more than studies and careers. Who was right, Rina or her mother? Why?

Participant No. 23 comes out squarely for the Gemeinschaft-adapted value placed on fertility and reproduction. She said that the mother is right because

...it will be difficult to have children after you are older. If you are giving birth at a young age, you have the strength and patience to take care of them. If you give birth in old age, you will not have patience.

Participant Nos. 14 and 18 also agree with the mother; both emphasized the physical negatives of having children when you are older. Participant No. 14 said: "*You know what, giving birth in time ...you have a healthy child; everything is good. Waiting and enjoying life, having fun, ruining her womb; it's an unhealthy child.*"

Participant No. 25 is in the middle; she said: "*On the one hand, children are good, but on the other hand it is equal education.*" When pressed for a decision on the dilemma, given that Rina is 30 years old, she said: "*She is right. She has studies in her head. She'll finish, get her diploma. Then what she wants, two or three [children], whatever she decides.*" She herself was married off by her father when she was nine years old. She also talked about her own daughter who had carried out a plan to get a job first and

then marry. The participant noted that her daughter now has three children. She herself had four. As we saw in a Maya community in Chiapas, Mexico, mothers think about their children's future in the current economic environment; they do not generally get stuck on bringing up children the way they were brought up if the economy is radically different (Greenfield, 2004).

Participant No. 12 was particularly interesting because she integrated the dominant Israeli view that you should develop yourself to the maximum through education with the Ethiopian fertility value; she said that Rina should stop her studies and get married. When asked why, she said it is because: "*She could have a... child, and the child would learn for her (he would realize her dream).*" She saw the desirability of intergenerational change, but also there is a wistfulness about the mother sacrificing her own dream. Participant No. 12 herself got married at about age 17. She has never been to school.

Participant No. 31 came out squarely with a Gesellschaft-adapted perspective. It is interesting that the economic motive, so important in living in a commercial (rather than subsistence) economy, is the basis for her view. She replied to the dilemma: "*First of all, study, finish, then marry. There are salaries and there are children, and she will raise them. Study, have a wedding, have a pregnancy—it is difficult.*" Here she seems to mean that doing all three things at once is difficult.

Procreation Versus Romantic Love

The artist, Mamit Sheto, described the statue in Fig. 13.32 as "*boyfriend and girlfriend.*" She noted that she did a lot on this theme, but she was very clear in her interview that this kind of scene is something that you see in Israel, but not in Ethiopia. The statue and her comment signal awareness that romantic relationships are a value in Israel and that Ethiopia, as she knew it, did not subscribe to this value. In contrast to the Gesellschaft-adapted value of romantic love is the Gemeinschaft-adapted value of procreation, both implicit in the art and explicit in the scenario responses, as discussed earlier (Manago et al., 2014). Despite Mamit's



Fig. 13.32 Boyfriend and girlfriend. By Mamit Sheto, Ethiopian Jewish Arts Workshop, Be'er Sheva, Israel, 2016. Note that this piece is signed, a mark of a movement away from art as a community expression and toward art as an individual expression. This is the only signed piece. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

interpretation of cultural difference between Ethiopia and Israel, we see in Fig. 13.22 a clay statue of a couple embracing made in Ethiopia in the 1960s.

Family Togetherness and Sharing

These Gemeinschaft-adapted values are depicted in multiple ways in the sculptures. One example is shown in Fig. 13.33. There you see a clay sculpture of parents and a child sharing a large Ethiopian bread.



Fig. 13.33 Family of three sharing a piece of Ethiopian bread. Unknown artist, Ethiopian Jewish Arts Workshop. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

They are physically close to each other and the son has his arms around the parents. In her interview, participant No. 12 said: “... *in Ethiopia...*, everyone sat together and ate, a lot of laughter. But here everyone [is] in his corner.”

Even more physical closeness is seen in Fig. 13.34 where we see a mother, father, and two children all embracing. This family embrace is an interesting contrast with the dyadic embrace that is paradigmatic in Gesellschaft environments. Participant No. 16 said: “*The hearts are far away. In Ethiopia, the hearts were close... The connection with the children in Ethiopia was better.*”



Fig. 13.34 Family. By Adiseh Baruch. 2016. Ethiopian Jewish Arts Workshop. Photograph by Patricia Greenfield

Conclusion

Research in the field of emigration has tended to ignore the experience of female emigrants and focused more on that of men (Boyd, 1986). This situation has resulted in emigrant women becoming “invisible” or “stereotyped.” However, gender has a substantial social significance in every culture, and it is important to understand the emigrant experience from the female perspective (Dion & Dion, 2001). This chapter has focused on the experience and art of seven Ethiopian women potters who immigrated to Israel. We have used Nsamenang’s (1992) theory to understand

their African lives, art, and values. Further, we used Greenfield's (2009) theory to connect the women's experiences, their values, and their art with the socio-cultural shifts they have undergone in the process of emigration from Ethiopia to Israel.

General Conclusion

My theory of social change, cultural evolution, and human development (Evers et al., 2021; Greenfield, 2009; Greenfield et al., 2021) has provided a framework for understanding how and when creative activities are used for community identity and survival, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, how and when they are used for individual expression. We have seen both in endogenous social change and in immigration that the creative production of textiles and pottery is focused on community identity and utilitarian function in more *Gemeinschaft* ecologies. In contrast, when the ecology shifts in the *Gesellschaft* direction, whether this happens within a community or through immigration, the shift leads to the creation of products that are innovative, diverse, and expressive of individual thoughts and ideas.

The findings deepen and broaden our understanding of the ecological and cultural influences on creativity. We have shown that innovation is not a valued form of creativity in subsistence village settings where residents learn at home from their families rather than at school from their teachers. Instead, creativity as innovation is a cultural adaptation to a commercial ecology in which formal education takes center stage. Indeed, placing a high value on innovation is a key feature of an individualistic psychology and culture. These psychological and cultural forms are maladaptive in low-tech isolated agricultural villages where family and/or community identities are central and overshadow individual identity in their importance. Equally important, our findings show that the definition of human creativity is not fixed but shifts over the generations to adapt to changing ecological circumstances.

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