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Sophia Korb

The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology

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Mothering Fundamentalism: The Transformation of Modern Women into Fundamentalists

Sophia Korb

The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology
Palo Alto, CA, USA

Despite upbringings influenced by modern feminism, many women choose to identify with new communities in the modern religious revivalist movement in the United States who claim to represent and embrace the patriarchal values against which their mothers and grandmothers fought. Because women's mothering is determinative to the family, it is therefore central to transforming larger social structures. This literature review is taken from a study which employed a qualitative design incorporating thematic analysis of interviews to explore how women's attitudes about being a mother and mothering change when they change religious communities from liberal paradigms to fundamentalist, enclavist belief systems. This has implicit relevance to the field of transpersonal psychology, which could incorporate the spiritual experiences of an often-ignored group.

Keywords: *religion, mothering, motherhood, conversion, feminism, spirituality, qualitative.*

Transpersonal psychology has been criticized for focusing too much on the positive aspects of religious or spiritual experience, bypassing suffering in favor of an optimistic worldview (Alexander, 1980), and lacking a clear enough understanding of the negative dimensions of human consciousness. In that regard, transpersonal psychology often takes a reductive approach to religion—seeing religion either as simply the vehicle for spiritual experience, or as a calcified obstacle to genuine spiritual experience. This framework fails to incorporate a full view of the pros and cons of religious community, discipline, and practice that may be present in many fundamentalist communities. However, Walsh and Vaughn (1993) proposed a different definition of transpersonal psychology, one that incorporates religion. These authors defined transpersonal psychology as the branch of psychology that is concerned with transpersonal experiences and related phenomena, noting, “these phenomena include the causes, effects and correlates of transpersonal experiences, as well as the disciplines and practices inspired by them” (p. 203). The topic of this article, women who mother in religious communities in which they were not raised, confronts new-age-influenced transpersonal psychology (Sovatsky, 1998) by exploring and reclaiming as an object of respectful study an often-exiled character: religious fundamentalism.

The modern religious revivalist movement arose in the 1970s as a backlash to the decadent 60s

in the United States. It was characterized by a rise in affiliation in both Christianity and Judaism (Aviad, 1983; Pew, 2010). These numbers continue to swell (Pew, 2010). This was not the first religious revival for either faith tradition, but is the most recent in America and was accompanied by growing political action and cultural shifting to the right, as well as reaffirmation of fundamental religious and social beliefs. Religious revivals accompanied a massive backlash against feminism and asserted a return to traditional gender roles (Almond & Appleby, 2006; Faludi, 1991). Men and women chose to engage in patriarchal constructions of identity and community.

Contemporary American culture is overwhelmingly pronatalist (Daniluck, 1996; Hird & Abshoff, 2000; Lisle, 1996; Meyers, 2001; Morell, 2000), valorizing mothers and procreation, yet modern motherhood is characterized by guilt and ambivalence (Guendouzi, 2006). Motherhood is one of the most important identities for women in both modern and fundamentalist religious communities. The work of mothering, not simply physically bearing a child, but the care and nurturing that mothers are expected to do, is integral to society. Mothers socialize children, instilling attitudes and ideas about the “sexual division of labor and sexual inequality both inside and outside the family and the non-familial world” (Chodorow, 1989, p. 3). Because “women's mothering is of profound importance to the family,” it

is also central to transforming larger social structures and society (p. 3). Motherhood is a time for values to be transmitted, and is thus a crucial developmental period to study psychological change in women who have moved from modern to religious communities.

Women transitioning from modern to fundamentalist communities may experience a profound shift in perspective on motherhood and family. Studying that shift elucidates several issues. First, understanding the reasons modern women embrace an outwardly pro-patriarchal lifestyle and raise their children in that society can inform the psychological community about what attributes within the modern communities women are choosing to leave, as well as seeing what attributes they value within the communities they join. Second, understanding the development of women's faith and mothering in fundamentalist women, and how this process interacts with personal identity, may add to understandings of religious practice, discipline, and community. This understanding is sorely needed, as feminist spiritual literature has tended to concentrate on goddess imagery (Spitler, 1992) or feminist critiques of traditional religions (Christ & Plaskow, 1979; Reuther, 1979) rather than the experience of women in traditional religious groups.

First, in order to create a background from which specific groups can be discussed, this article will define religious fundamentalism. Then it will address the historical backgrounds of Christianity and Judaism's fundamentalist movements and describe each briefly. Next, the connections between the two communities will be addressed. Different motherhood ideologies will be described and analyzed, first in the fundamentalist community, and then with regard to modern American society in general. Finally, the approaches taken so far to the study of women in these communities will be critiqued, and a new one will be suggested, affirming fundamentalist women's ability and agency. This is a preliminary consideration, a review of the terrain of fundamentalist mothering from a transpersonal/feminist perspective into an ongoing piece of research that the author is conducting. In that research the author recruited and interviewed women for whom this experience is their lived reality.

Cross-cultural Fundamentalism

For the purposes of this article, religious fundamentalism is defined as:

A system of absolute values and practiced faith in God that firmly relies on sacred canonical texts, a significant level of affinity among its members, seclusion from the world that surrounds it, strict communal discipline and a patriarchal hierarchy. (Barzilai & Barzilai, 2004, para. 3)

This definition has the advantage of including commonalities found by extensive research and also the understanding of how the fundamentalists understand themselves as a religious community based on a theology dependent on fundamental methods of textual analysis. This definition is intended to be inclusive of both fundamentalist Jews and Christians without denigrating either.

Fundamentalism has been explained as both a pathological retreat from reality and a rational reaction against modernity (Monroe & Kreidie, 1997). However, a broader definition of fundamentalism, as seen from inside the movement, is a religious reaction to modernism. In that view, fundamentalism seeks to recover the lost force of religion and its institutions that has been hidden, or repair the chain that has been broken, by modernity (Castells, 1996).

In 1987, Marty and Appleby (1994) began an international scholarly investigation of conservative religious movements throughout the world called The Fundamentalism Project. The project, which collected empirical data from all over the world, concluded in 1995. The project understood fundamentalism as a militant opposition to modernity, which is a controversially inclusive definition. The authors for the capstone project, *Strong Religion* (Almond, Appleby, & Sivan, 2003), wrote that it is improper in most contexts to use the term fundamentalist with regard to Jews. However, they also wrote that the danger of restricting that word because of inappropriate use is that it can restrict the conversation and reduce the ability to discuss fundamentalism as a global phenomenon.

The Fundamentalism Project found several similarities between fundamentalist groups in their global study. First, the groups are founded on a profound embedded patriarchy; men lead and women and children follow. Second, the rules of their religion are complex and rigid and must be followed. Third, fundamentalist groups do not accept a relative pluralism. The rules of their group apply to everyone everywhere. Fourth, they see discrete groups of insiders, and all others as outsiders.

Fifth, although they claim to pine for an older age and yearn for a past time when their religion was pure, they engage in selective historical revisionism to reinforce their nostalgic view of a utopian past. Sixth, they see their religious views as weapons against a hostile world (Marty & Appleby, 1994).

History of Christian Fundamentalism in the United States

Modern Christian Fundamentalism's rise is connected with the rise of the Christian Right, also called the Religious Right, a political movement characterized by their strong support of conservative social and political values and causes. This rise is often self-attributed to political action against *Roe v. Wade* (Joyce, 2009), a US Supreme court case decided on January 22, 1973, that upheld the legal right to a woman's termination of pregnancy for any reason, until the time when the fetus becomes viable, or able to live outside the mother's body. This understanding of their own history reinforces the Christian Right's current political agenda, which concentrates on a triad of sexually related agenda items: abortion, homosexual marriage, and abstinence only sexual education (Deutchman, 2008).¹ Regardless of the historical origin of the movement, American Christian Fundamentalists are politically conservative, are against abortion rights for women, resist government's intrusion into family life, and tend to be politically involved.

Within the US population, 26.3% identify themselves as as evangelical Protestants (Pew, 2010). Distinguishing between evangelical Protestants in general and fundamentalist evangelical Protestants can be difficult because they share many traits and beliefs and are part of the same overarching category. Also, fundamentalists exert political and social control over more than their small group. Evangelical Protestants share a belief in the need to be born again, some expression of the gospel in effort, a high regard for Biblical authority, and an emphasis on teachings that proclaim the life and death of Jesus Christ. The more specific group of fundamentalist evangelical Protestants have a more specific belief defined below.

Though over 50% of Americans are Protestant Christians, the makeup of that group includes an increasing number of evangelicals, as Liberal Protestantism is in demographic decline. Southern Baptist is the largest group within evangelicalism, and included within the category of fundamentalism. For the last 20 years, Southern Baptists have been growing

at 12% a year outside the South and 2% a year inside the South. They have gone from being an intentionally white denomination—as late as 1970—to being a denomination that is currently 20% ethnic. There are 750,000 African-American Southern Baptists, and about a half-million Hispanic American Southern Baptists.

History of Jewish Fundamentalism in the United States

Judaism has had a similar fundamentalist² revival, attributed to both a backlash against the liberal 1960s as well as a surge of Jewish pride and identification after Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War (Aviad, 1983).³ In the 1970s, religious affiliation in Jews increased across the board, in the US, internationally, and in every denomination (Heilman, 2006). Many Jews who were once unaffiliated with any movement within Judaism became Reform, the most liberal Jewish movement, and those already affiliated with a particular denomination of Judaism moved to the right. In the Orthodox world, the influx of once liberal or secular Jews joining Orthodox communities and adopting Orthodox ways of life and thinking became known as the Baal Teshuva Movement (Heilman, 1992, 2006). These new adherents to Orthodoxy are known as baalei teshuva (masters of return or repentance), in the singular baal teshuva for a man or baalat teshuva for a woman. The total number of baalei teshuva is unknown but is estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands (Heilman, 2006).

In broad strokes, one can divide Orthodox Jewish society into two major groups: the Modern Orthodox, who explicitly engage with the outside world ideologically, and the Hareidim, or Ultra-Orthodox, who engage with the outside world not for its own sake, but rather because of pragmatism (Heilman, 1992, 2006; Yehuda, Friedman, Rosenbaum, Labinsky, & Schmeidler, 2007). Estimates place the number of Hareidi Jews in America at around 250,000 (Wattenberg, 2005), but statistics about the Hareidi population are scarce, not only because of difficulties in counting the members of the community but also because of a Hareidi taboo on counting people at all.

One third of the Orthodox Jewish community is comprised of 18-25 year olds, many of whom have chosen to join the community as young adults (Ringel, 2008). These adherents continue to join. According to the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, synagogue affiliation in the Orthodox community grew from 10% to 20% of the general Jewish population from 1990 to

2001, but stayed about the same or declined in other Jewish denominations (Heilman, 2006).

The Baal Teshuva Movement is associated with a general cultural shift to the right towards more enclavist, conservative forms of Judaism opposed to modernity. Rabbi Yosef Blau (2004), the spiritual director of Yeshiva University (one of the cornerstone institutions of Modern Orthodoxy) has noted the Orthodox community's difficulty in integrating the not particularly modernist baalei teshuva:

A baal teshuva movement has emerged with a significant number of Jews from non-traditional homes returning to the observance of grandparents and great grandparents. In fact one of the challenges facing modern Orthodoxy is that many of these returnees are attracted to a European Orthodoxy. (para. 6)

Rabbi Blau pointed out a discontinuity of culture and purpose between the traditional Modern Orthodox and the newly joined Orthodox. A baal teshuva may be interested in learning Yiddish, wearing garments from Eastern Europe, and escaping from the perceived excesses of modern culture, whereas non-baalei teshuva may be more likely to engage in Modern Orthodoxy.

Though baalei teshuva may be interested in engaging in the old European style, the way that Orthodox Jews learn to be part of their community has changed in the last hundred years. Traditional Jewish communities were based primarily on behavioral mimesis of the religious way of life, but today, with increasing literacy, both Modern Orthodox and Hareidi Jewry emphasize the value of the religious texts as the basic source of increasingly strict norms, as a key cultural symbol, and as the organizer of the social order (Soloveitchik, 1994). Baalei teshuva are often very concerned about their full integration into their chosen community, and some see their status as a baal teshuva not just as a transitional status but also as an identity (Sands, 2009). The Baal Teshuva Movement is itself one sign of the difference between American and European Judaism. How an individual practices Judaism has changed from fate to choice (Davidman, 1991).

Women's Lives in Christian Fundamentalism

The Christian fundamentalism movement, also known as Fundamentalist Christianity or fundamentalist evangelicalism, is characterized by affirming a fundamental set of Christian beliefs: (1) the

inerrancy of the Bible, (2) sola scriptura, the belief that the Bible is the only authority for the Christian Church, (3) the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, (4) the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, the idea that Jesus died on the cross to atone for the sins of others, (5) the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and (6) the imminent personal return of Jesus Christ (Colaner & Giles, 2008; Wagner, 2003).

Other doctrines of individual congregations vary, but members of the movement still recognize one another. Some fundamentalists embrace the term, despite or because of the fact that it is sometimes used as a pejorative. Some fundamentalist leaders enjoy the separatism and group cohesion inherent in rejection from the greater society (Wagner, 2003). Many conservative fundamentalist groups view the other congregations as "co-belligerents," allied people fighting against a common cause (Joyce, 2009). The churches pit themselves against abortion rights for women, and more broadly, see themselves fighting against the influence of modern day feminism writ large, which they see as responsible for the breakdown of the family as well as the increased pressure in modern society for women to look sexy and attractive (Brasher, 1998; Joyce, 2009; Luker, 1984).

Though fundamentalist groups differ in their details, several themes are typically true of fundamentalist communities. First, there is an emphasis on individual salvation; each individual needs to come to redemption of their own accord and be "born again." Another main theological feature of fundamentalist Christianity is the headship of men, based on the Biblical verse,

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22, New International Version)

This theology has evolved into a spiritual practice for women based on submission to their husbands. Some Fundamentalist Christians see this as natural and a due right for men because of women's punishment and culpability in the Fall from Grace (Joyce, 2009), but the main thrust of the theology emphasizes that the submission is not about the man himself, but rather that one is submitting to Christ through submitting to one's husband. The man is the spiritual head of the

family and the submission has metaphysical properties: it reorders the family as a microcosm of the universe, reordering humans with respect to God. These practices of spiritual submission reinforce a society that embraces traditional, homebound roles for women. Submissive wives and mothers have an extensive social network within their particular religious communities, but also across communities, including very active online fora. The Patriarch's Wives group on Yahoo is an excellent example, where women send each other support in the spirit of Titus 2:3-5,

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. (New International Version)

Thus, there is textual support for the practice of women mentoring each other in wifely submission and being a housewife.

Brenda Brasher (1998) performed an ethnographic study in which she spent six months as an active participant in two Christian fundamentalist congregations. Brasher went to women's ministries and Bible study groups, openly as a researcher, and listened to conversion narratives to explore how and why women become involved in these groups. Her writing brought to light the apparent paradox that fundamentalist women can be powerful people in a religious sphere organized around their submission. Gender functions as a "sacred partition" (p. 5), which literally divides the congregation in two, establishing parallel religious worlds. One world is led by men and encompasses public congregational life; the second is a more private, domestic world, composed of and led entirely by women. The women-only activities both create and sustain a parallel world within and among the different fundamentalist congregations. This enables the women to direct the course of their lives and empowers them in their relationships with others. The women develop intimate social networks that serve as a resource for those in distress and provide for coalition when women wish to alter the patterns of more public congregational life, despite the fact that they are ostensibly not empowered in that realm. Some authors have explained women's

involvement in these groups by pointing to the fact that the prescription of a home-based life for women releases men from the macho individualism of secular culture, in turn creating devoted family men (Davidman, 1991; Luker, 1984).

Kristin Luker (1984) interviewed pro-life and pro-choice activists and very carefully traced the worldviews of the two sides in her seminal work, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. Luker suggested that essentially the two sides are characterized by different values and ideas about women's roles and the family. Although not all fundamentalists are pro-life activists, Luker's data offered an interesting window into a world of the more politically active, and those who feel they can represent at least the political interests of the community. As evidenced above, abortion remains one of the Religious Right's primary political campaigns.

In 1984, 80% of Luker's study participants were Catholic activists; nonetheless Luker's work remains important in studying today's mostly Protestant fundamentalist Christians. Though the demographic has changed, Luker's 1984 analysis still articulately explains a worldview consistent with this political action, now mostly carried out by members of fundamentalist Christian groups. Her analyses of the activists' philosophies are consistent with more recent research done exclusively on Protestant fundamentalist groups, detailed more precisely below (see Joyce, 2009; Brasher, 1998). This may reflect a shift to the Right in general, a sign that the worldview of activists in 1984 is now the commonly held perspectives of many religious groups.

Second, 60% of those pro-life activists interviewed in Luker's (1984) study were religious converts, people who grew up in other religious communities. According to conventional wisdom about "the zeal of the converted," religious converts are often those who most vehemently espouse the ideologies of their adopted group. This folk saying has been backed up recently by a quantitative Pew Research study, which demonstrated that "people who have switched religions consistently exhibit higher levels of religious commitment than those who still belong to their childhood faith" (Pond, 2009, para. 6). Also, research indicates that some adult converts play out, and sometimes resolve, their psychodynamic issues, dysfunctional patterns learned in childhood and brought forward into adulthood, in their newfound religion (Mirsky, 1992; Mirsky & Kaushinsky, 1989). Some might speculate about patterns of psychodynamic

wounding in the secular community that may lead people both to join fundamentalist groups and serve as activists against abortion rights for women and against feminism in general.

Some of the following ideas about social reality are characteristic of both Christian and Jewish fundamentalists, and relevant to their relationship to motherhood, so will be explicated in more detail below in sections about fundamentalist motherhood. Here, though, they serve to explain Christian fundamentalist involvement in anti-abortion politics. Fundamentalists believe that men and women are intrinsically different (Joyce, 2009; Brasher, 1998; Heilman, 2006). This both leads to and explains the different social roles assigned to men and women in fundamentalist society, which fundamentalists view as proscriptively and descriptively positive. Fundamentalists believe that motherhood is the most fulfilling role that women can have (Joyce, 2009). They believe that mothering is a full-time job, which deserves complete time commitment (Joyce, 2009; Brasher, 1998). Because they see it as so encompassing, they tend to disbelieve that one can be in the work world and still do as good a job with one's home and family. Fundamentalists see the sets of tasks required in the public men's world and the domestic women's world as requiring a different set of emotional skills; they imagine that the working mother must shift modes to transition between her working and mothering skills. They argue that doing so is difficult and damaging to her mothering and to her work.

According to Luker (1984), these views support the belief that abortion is wrong in three ways, all of which are relevant to fundamentalist models of motherhood. First, abortion is taking a human life, and what makes women special is their ability to nourish life, so all abortions are degrading to all women. Second, "by giving women control over their fertility, it breaks up an intricate set of social relationships between men and women that has traditionally surrounded (and in the ideal case protected) women and children" (Luker, 1984, p. 162). This applies to birth control in general, not just abortion, and may explain and predict negative views of fundamentalists towards birth control. In both cases, the fundamentalists see themselves not as taking rights away from women, but rather as maintaining women's power. Fundamentalists continue to see themselves as protecting women from abortion (Shaw, 2008). Third, fundamentalists in the anti-abortion movement see

abortion as wrong because it supports a worldview that diminishes the traditional roles of men and women. Fundamentalists in general see those roles as natural and good; the roles are natural extensions of the two separate male and female spheres described above—women who are tender, moral, emotional, and self-sacrificing are the exclusive holders of those feminine qualities and occupy the female sphere. There is a conflation of the idea of the feminine and actual physical females. When women cease to be traditional, fundamentalists see a loss of those qualities. Fundamentalists believe society on the whole benefits from the division of male and female qualities and attributes into separate spheres, where those qualities can more fully express themselves and are not compromised by their combination in one individual.

Women's Lives in Jewish Fundamentalism

Orthodox Jewish society is family-centered, tends to cluster in urban areas, and valorizes the study of ancient texts. There are strict gender divisions from a young age and socialization is generally same-sex. Members of the Orthodox community follow legalistic interpretations of ancient texts as interpreted by the Talmud and later scholars in almost every area of their individual lives. From what thoughts to think about other people, to how to pour tea on the Jewish Sabbath, to what shoe to put on first, Orthodox Judaism is integrated into almost every action one might take.

Hareidi Judaism, what many consider to be fundamentalist Judaism, advocates segregation from non-Jewish culture, although not from non-Jewish society entirely. Though Hareidi Orthodoxy's differences with Modern Orthodoxy ostensibly lie in interpretation of the nature of traditional Jewish legal concepts and in understanding what constitutes acceptable application of these concepts, the major division is one of culture. The enclavist Hareidim eschew engagement with modernity and the influence of the outside world, including the influence of modern ideas of culture and sexuality. Hareidi men occupy all the public religious leadership roles in their community. Hareidi Judaism is divided strictly between male and female spheres. Because Hareidi Judaism emphasizes that Jewish men have a constant, unending obligation to learn Torah, Jewish women take on responsibilities for many communal functions outside of the parameters of ritual observance. Hareidi women run charities, educational foundations, and orphanages with minimal input or help from men, aside from figureheads.

Tznius (Yiddish), or modesty, is a prominent ideology of fundamentalist Jewish women. Though the Biblical dictate of *hatznea leches* or “walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8, New International Version) is enjoined upon both men and women, traditionally the law has been interpreted to restrict women’s actions much more than men’s. In fact, the dictate of *tznius* has been said to be the women’s equivalent of Torah study for men, the paramount obligation in the Jewish world (Falk, 1998).

In other words, the same reward that a man accrues for his fulfillment of the most important stricture within Judaism, studying the tradition, a woman accrues for wearing modest clothing and not attracting attention to herself. There are strict restrictions on women’s dress and action, ranging from dictates about not boasting about oneself to skirt lengths to—at its most extreme—admonitions that young girls should not laugh and dance in the streets lest they draw attention to themselves (Yafeh, 2007; Falk, 1998). This concept of modesty extends beyond restrictions of dress into an ideology of both physical and emotional humility and modesty. While both Modern Orthodoxy and Hareidi Judaism acknowledge the legal and spiritual importance of modesty, the emphasis on particular details and the central importance of this ideology for women is one of the major departures of the two communities. Feminist critiques of this construction point out the asymmetrical emphasis on women’s dress and action as opposed to men’s, as well as placing responsibility for male sexual behavior on women (Yafeh, 2007). Men and women will not speak to members of the opposite sex that they are not related to, let alone shake hands. Dating only takes place through a matchmaking process leading to courtship and marriage.

Jewish fundamentalist ideology tends to emphasize the concept that women’s private role is an elevated one (Sands, Spero, & Danzig 2007; Shai, 2002). Though women are firmly placed in the domestic realm, Jewish fundamentalist society differs from most other fundamentalist societies in that women are responsible for both domestic life and for economically supporting the family, especially in the early years of the marriage (Shai, 2002). At that stage, Jewish women work outside the home, and Jewish men are often encouraged to maintain a lifestyle exclusively devoted to Torah study (Stadler, 2002). However, this isolationist and singular focus towards Torah study for fundamentalist Jewish

males leads to the irony that women are more connected to the outside world, despite an ideology that actively promotes modesty and separation for women.

In 2007, Sands, Spero, and Danzig authored a study comparing what male and female baalei teshuva appreciate most about the culture that they have joined. Baalot teshuva women like the community and family-centered society and appreciate that aspect more than their male counterparts, who tend to appreciate structure and learning. As such, the parts of the adopted culture of the baalei teshuva that they most enjoy are those parts that are emphasized for their gender. This could be due to a number of factors, one of the most obvious being that those women who choose to become baalot teshuva are those who appreciate women’s roles in their chosen culture. In Ringel’s 2007 study, baalot teshuva reported that they perceived Jewish fundamentalist society as understanding women better than secular society.

Fundamentalist Motherhood

Despite their basic similarities, different fundamentalist groups have different cultures, traditions, and expressions of their beliefs. In Berger’s (1969) *The Sacred Canopy*, the author theorized that religious adherence and practice in modern societies is increasingly a matter of individual choice. He claimed that this heightened ability to choose would inevitably and inexorably weaken traditional religious commitments. Warner’s (1993) “Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States” article asserted the future of American religious choice, arguing that “religion need not represent something in which people are primordially rooted. Religious affiliation in the United States is not tribal” (p. 1078). Warner’s point of view is challenged by authors who have stated that despite the existence of choice, choosing does not make the commitment of an adherent weaker (Davidman, 1991). Additionally, many religious traditions in modern America incorporate an ascriptive element in their understandings of the boundaries around their community. Ascriptive religious traditions claim that religious identity adheres to a person upon their birth: for example, Jewish law states that a Jew is a convert or the child born to a Jewish mother. However, in Avishai’s 2008 study of women observing the laws of *niddah* (menstrual separation), she concluded that religiosity “is a status that is learned, negotiated, and achieved by adhering to or performing prescribed practices that distinguish the religious from the nonreligious” (p. 429). Religions of ascription are

contrasted with religions of achievement, in which personal belief is the determinant of the boundaries of religious identity (Cadge & Davidman, 2006). An example of this is the Protestant Christian belief that personal salvation is the only path to heaven; each person must independently come to his or her belief in God.

Though ascription and achievement are conceptually distinct ways of constructing religious identities, in a study conducted by Cadge and Davidman (2006) in which they surveyed Jewish and Buddhist Americans, both from groups with strong inherited religious identities, they found that the respondents combined the two ideas when talking about their religious life. Rather than being treated as a dichotomy, the concepts of ascription and achievement were integrated in nuanced ways in the narratives of religious identity told by these Americans.

These differences are relevant when comparing fundamentalist mothers, the main focus of this article. Mothers from these different traditions may have different goals and measures of success for their children and different priorities in educating them. Because the religious identity of the child comes from the mother in traditional Judaism, and from the child's faith in fundamentalist Christianity, motherhood in those traditions may be conceptually and experientially different.

Due to their restricted public roles, the primary valued role for Hareidi women is as wife, mother, and housekeeper (Longman, 2000). A fundamentalist Jewish woman's worth is defined according to her relational capacities—how she relates to her husband, children, family, and the community at large (Longman, 2008). In studies of fundamentalist Jewish women's spirituality, the women have reported experiencing personal fulfillment by putting their children and husbands before themselves (Ringel, 2008). Jewish women see motherhood as a religious responsibility (Burt & Rudolph, 2000; Yehuda et al., 2007) and connected to their experience of spirituality and relationship with God (Burt & Rudolph, 2000). Family is seen as a means for self-actualization (Ringel, 2008). Motherhood is an extremely important goal for fundamentalist Jewish women, such that their schooling is primarily geared toward it (Longman, 2008).

Jewish motherhood is particularly stereotyped in America. The stereotype of Jewish mothers is an emasculating, controlling, materially-focused, pushy

woman who evokes the Oedipus complex in her children (Antler, 2007). This stereotype emerged in the 1950s as immigrant Jews made their way to the suburbs. Antler posited that it was a way to locate stereotypes about Jews in just one group of Jewish society, allowing for Jews to gain greater acceptance in a secular world by blaming their difference on mothering practices.

One recent qualitative study (Hamama-Raz, 2010) studied spontaneous abortions in Hareidi women. The women found the loss far more devastating than their partners. The experience brought up issues of self-esteem concerning their value as women. The self-judgment of the women made their sense of isolation much worse. The women brought up issues of faith, belief in God, and a sense of loss of Divine Providence. This finding speaks to the religious importance of motherhood to Hareidi women.

In 2006, Fader performed a discourse analysis on how Hareidi women speak to their children. The author noted that children's queries regarding gender categories are an important time for caregivers to essentialize gender differences as markers of Jewish morality. Fader wrote that Hareidi women implicitly teach children that their relationships to those around them are parallel to the hierarchy between them and God. To their children, Hasidic (a subset of the Hareidi) women caregivers present communal hierarchies of authority as rehearsal for and parallel to obeying divine authority. Local hierarchies of authority (gender, age, and religious practice) gain their legitimacy because parents and older siblings, teachers, and religious leaders all consistently share authority as the transmitters of sacred beliefs and practices.

In response to children's disobedience or challenges, caregivers respond in a wide variety of ways, from least severe to most severe: reminding them of responsibility, warning of a boundary that may not be crossed, and, as a last resort, publicly shaming them (Fader, 2006). In the most severe cases, the child's behavior might even be compared with that of Gentile children or animals. Fader took note of the ideology that Hareidi Jewish children must always care about what they do and say because of the belief that God is always watching. Von Hirsch Erikson (1995) similarly noted that the phrase "I don't care" is a particularly loaded one and elicits very strong reactions from mothers and teachers.

Fundamentalist Christian mothers also see motherhood as an incredibly important part of their

identity. Motherhood is promoted as part and parcel of a fundamentalist woman's Christian religious identity—that is, as a unifying identity. In Fundamentalist Christian ideology, the sin of Eve is redeemed through the act of childbirth using the following quote from the New Testament:

Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing. (I Timothy 2:11-15a)

Because mothering inculcates children with the culture of their society, the role of the mother is the link between the general society and the woman's body (El-Or, 2002). According to the point of view expressed in I Timothy, the actual act of childbirth is what is redemptive, not the mothering that comes afterwards. It is a point of view that emphasizes the physical rather than the experiential.

A quantitative study by Colaner (2008) of 134 college-aged, evangelical women pointed to an interesting intersection of role ideologies and aspirations. The young women surveyed did not jointly hold career and mothering aspirations. The young women saw those two goals as separate. They were less conflicted about motherhood than modern women who hold more egalitarian points of view. In these women, the desire to adhere to the traditional female role preceded the actual realization of the goal of motherhood. Women in the Evangelical subculture do not seem to experience the same tensions of "having it all" as women at large.

Modern American and fundamentalist motherhood may be different in some respects. Women in modern religious or secular culture must contend with competing values: simultaneously women should stay home and tend to children, as well as create and maintain an image of a high-powered, beautiful professional. These conflicts will be addressed at length below. However, fundamentalist women do not necessarily contend with the same competing values. They are part of a society that actively supports the choices that they make and rejects the modern demands of a career for women. In the research on *baalot teshuva*, many women report that they joined their group in order to join a society that is more encouraging toward traditional femininity (Kaufman, 1991; Longman, 2007) and a nuclear family

(Danzger, 1989). Religion affects parent-child relations as well as the other way around (Pearce, 1998). Pearce pointed to three ways in which religion impacts parent-child relations: religions disseminate the idea that families are important, religious communities provide formal support for families, and religious groups add to the family's social ties.

Education is an important responsibility for fundamentalists, who often see their parenting as better than that of the secular people around them (Heilman, 2006, p. 259) and define their observance largely in terms of their difference from others (Avishai, 2008; Heilman, 2006). In religious enclave communities that engage in explicit cultural critiques of the society surrounding them, appeals to moral superiority are one of the key means for retaining members and building boundaries (Sivan, 1995, p.17). Both Jewish and Christian fundamentalist communities have developed extensive online homeschooling resources and private school systems (Kunzman, 2009).

As mentioned before, Shai (2002) studied Orthodox women using a family development approach, with the hypothesis that the asynchronous pattern of Orthodox Jewish women's lives as compared to the rest of society would negatively impact them. The Orthodox women's lives are out of step in that for young Jewish families, the highest priority of the young family is that the man learns Torah full time, so Jewish women work as much as they can and have children, supported by either or both sets of parents, during the time when modern American families are developing their professional identities and stockpiling money toward the future. Despite being out of step with how the rest of the society does family, finances, and motherhood, fundamentalist women are not showing ill effects. Shai explained this by pointing to the strong insular community that supports fundamentalist women. Individual women who are differing from outside society are not doing it alone, they are doing it as a community with particular values and a specific timeline.

Barrenness is a major theological issue in cultures in which the ability to bear children is exalted, impacting both Jewish and Christian fundamentalist societies. Two books by Christian authors illustrate popular opinions of fundamentalist Christians with regard to the situation of infertile couples. Vicky Love (1984) in *Childless is Not Less* provided the perspective that childlessness is a tragedy to be overcome, never a conscious choice. Kristen Johnson

Ingram, (1988) in *Childless but Not Barren*, wrote a number of fictionalized Bible stories about childless women. Ingram offered stories of nine childless women from the Bible and nine women from real life and showed how their faith in God led them to live fulfilled and valuable lives. In her perspective, all nurturing skills are those of mothering. Not having children challenges a woman to perceive God's grace in another way; her recommendation was to transform the "mothering skills" a woman has to care for others in ways other than in biological motherhood and to spread God's light in different ways. To some members of the evangelical Christian community, fertility treatments are also discouraged. They see barrenness as something to be accepted from God if that is His choice, while recommending prayer to change God's decree (Ingram, 1988).

In Tamar El-Or's (1994) anthropological study of Hareidi women, *Educated and Ignorant*, one of the women in her study, Nava, is childless. Though she is from an important lineage within her religious group, and thus is part of the social elite, she is threatened with a potential loss of status because she is three years married and not pregnant. El-Or interpreted the other women's preoccupation with Nava's attempts to get pregnant as a desire to see her infertility as punishment. Infertility would cause an incredible loss of status, even for a successful young woman from an elite family.

In general, conservative religious beliefs predict more disapproval for chosen childlessness (Koropecj-Cox & Pendell, 2007). Christian and Jewish fundamentalists also have a range of different attitudes toward sexual activity and birth control within their own and other's communities. The major launching points for the Christian evangelical right's political action have been fighting against three issues: abortion, birth control, and gay marriage (Deutchman, 2008). The fact that these are all related to sexuality is not a coincidence. The Christian Right's perception is that sexuality is a major axis around which their values differ from the modern society around them. As Luker (1984) noted:

Rosalind Petchesky ... argued as early as 1983 that issues over sexuality could well serve as the glue to bind a new generation of conservatives together, with opposition to changes in sexual and gender roles taking on the role that anti-communism once played in binding diverse conservative constituencies together. (p. 223)

Furthermore, the Christian movement is the main driving force behind abstinence-only education, and different Christian Fundamentalist groups have different interpretations and opinions about the permissibility of birth control. One common opinion in the Christian Right is natalism: promoting procreation, and eschewing all forms of birth control. For example, Charles D. Provan (1989) argued,

"Be fruitful and multiply" ... is a command of God, indeed the first command to a married couple. Birth control obviously involves disobedience to this command, for birth control attempts to prevent being fruitful and multiplying. Therefore birth control is wrong, because it involves disobedience to the Word of God. Nowhere is this command done away with in the entire Bible; therefore it still remains valid for us today. (p. xxx)

Different fundamentalist Jewish communities have different attitudes toward the legal or social acceptability of birth control (Nishmat, 2010). These legal restrictions arise from the interpretation of the commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28) and the commandment "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not desist" (Ecclesiastes 11:6), which obligates Fundamentalist Jews to do more than the simple letter of the law as stated in the Book of Genesis (i.e., to have big families). In most Jewish communities, there are few injunctive rules against all forms of birth control; many rabbis will give women dispensation to use family planning methods for a variety of reasons (Nishmat, 2010).

Despite the technicalities allowing women to use birth control, the social system creates descriptive rules against the use of birth control: it is considered taboo to ask for birth control. In a sample of 1751 married urban Israeli Jewish women, contraceptive use was reported by 73% of secular subjects, 54% of Modern Orthodox women, and 15% of ultra-Orthodox women (Haimon-Kuchmon & Hochner-Celinkier, 2007). Within the fundamentalist community, contraception is employed mainly for birth spacing, contrasted to secular women who use contraception to prevent pregnancy altogether or postpone even their first pregnancy. In many fundamentalist communities, families of more than 14 children are the norm as well as the expectation for women to be considered successful members of their society. The average birth rate of Israeli Hareidi Jews is

7.7 children per family (Remmenick, 2008), one of the highest birth rates of any nation. Many Hareidi women invoke Jewish traumas such as the Holocaust when questioned about their large family size (Wattenberg, 2005).

Additionally, the taboo against birth control is accompanied by a strong fundamentalist Jewish legal and social taboo against premarital sexuality. All touching is forbidden between members of the opposite sex who are not related to each other. Fundamentalist Jewish groups have not been major players in the American politics of abstinence education or birth control, the political issues which affect people both in and out of their own communities. One reason for this may simply be a more liberal stance on abortion in Judaism than in Christianity (Feldman, 1995). In both communities, a perception that outside society cares less for children and family values than their community reinforces a sense of their own community identity and the danger of the outside world (Davidman, 1992; Joyce, 1996).

Modern American Motherhood

Mothering is a social construct found in every contemporary society (Arendell, 2000). It encompasses more than simply bearing, nursing, and caring for a child, functions that can be done by someone who is not mothering and by someone who is not a mother. Mothering is largely determined by social circumstances; mothers do not nurture or care for their children the same way across cultures, and what it means to be a mother is reinforced and supported by cultures in different ways. How one cares for a child, and how one conceives of that caring, is culturally organized.

The feminist movement in the United States affected more than simply the rise of fundamentalism that fostered change in the American religious communities. In addition, motherhood as a modern institution among women not in these religious communities also drastically changed. Though feminist action led to great strides in what women can accomplish in their careers, this was simultaneously accompanied by increased expectations of motherhood. On one hand, the mothers who stayed home needed to justify that decision by making motherhood into a full-time job that required all of their energy, while mothers who went out to work applied the same standards of competitive work to their home life. Those rising expectations led to a new style of mothering named intensive mothering by Sharon Hays, who has researched the social construction of motherhood since the 1980s.

Hays explained, “This motherhood mandate declares that mothering is exclusive, wholly child centered, emotionally involving, and time-consuming” (as cited in Arendell, 2000, p. 1194). This is the dominant ideology among North Americans in general. There is extensive research on the intensive mothering ideology and how it has increased the amount of conflict and guilt that mothers are feeling (Arendell, 2000; Guendouzi, 2006). Yet, this is not the only current modern Western model of motherhood. Researchers Elvin-Novak and Thomsson (2001) reported that in general, Swedish mothers are rewarded for being more happy and fulfilled, from expression of their individualism in their own careers to promoting well-being in their children. The American intensive mothering mandate is not the only possible one.

Access to ideology and fulfillment of the hegemonic American model described above are highly class-based (Arendell, 2000; Daniluck, 1996). While in the 1970s and 1980s, middle class and poor mothers were taught that the attachment with their child was the most important priority, more important than their individual or personal fulfillment, external pressures dictated different outcomes for the two groups. The federal welfare-to-work programs of the 1990s required poor mothers to seek employment outside the home as a condition of their welfare benefit, ostensibly to the detriment of their children. The rhetoric positioned them as selfish for staying home.

At the same time, middle class mothers were required to decide whether to self-sacrifice by staying home with their children or to “selfishly” sacrifice their children’s welfare by going to work. It is no wonder that modern motherhood is characterized by considerable ambivalence and guilt among women (e.g., Colaner, 2008; Giele, 2008; Guendouzi, 2006). Thus, American social policy reinforces the dominant ideas of a good mother as one who is married and supported by her partner, and as such, reifies a particular view of appropriate women’s roles (Arendell, 2000).

Motherhood, as the cultural construction through which children are educated for society, presents the opportunity for the society as well as the family to judge the mother. Mothers are held accountable for the deeds of their children (Hartman-Halbertal, 2002) and are blamed when things go wrong. The psychological literature points to different psychopathologies and names the characteristics of the mothers of individuals

who suffer from those conditions. For example, in the 1950s, it was proposed by Bateson, Jackson, Haley, and Weakland (1956) that children develop schizophrenia when their mothers face them with double-bind scenarios. This was debunked later, when it was discovered that mothers instead give double-bind statements when faced with difficult children who exhibit prodromal symptoms of schizophrenia (Koopmans, 1997). Mothers find themselves constantly negotiating with the “oughts” of motherhood (Hartman-Halbertal, 2002). Additionally, mothers expect themselves to mother in ways other than how they were mothered because they recognize the change in culture and new psychological oughts. However, many mothers find themselves, to their horror, saying exactly what their mothers said (Fraiberg, Adelson, & Shapiro, 1980). Motherhood is often characterized by self-doubt on the part of women, rather than questioning the social pressures around them (Hartman-Halbertal, 2002). As a counterpoint, critics of the contemporary culture often point to the deinstitutionalization of the private domain, characterized by changing family norms, as a cause of discomfort, leading to the rise of religious movements (Kaufman, 1991).

Motherhood is socially entwined with notions of femininity (Medina & Magnuson, 2009). The specific kind of intensive motherhood conceived of today is a modern social construct, but mythologized as natural and immutable. Social deconstruction of the maternal instinct concept was pioneered by Badinter (1981) in her work, *Motherlove*, which traced the development of the myth of maternal love and sacrifice.

Badinter (1981) argued that many early French feminists, fired by Jean Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile*, were encouraged to view child rearing as a liberating and empowering appropriation of their husbands’ former sphere of influence. It became the role of women to transmit their educational and moral values to their children, and as such, the education of women became more highly valued. This was motivated by the changing French economy’s experience of the Industrial Revolution, which required men to work long hours outside the home. This forced women into what had traditionally been the men’s role of running the home, and also put a growing importance on individual children as French citizens and workers. In order to stem the loss represented by childhood mortality, French women were persuaded that their “new kingdom” was in their home, raising their children (p. 179).

Mothering Fundamentalism

Badinter (1981) argued that maternal instinct is a relatively recent social construct. It was designed to confine women to a very limited conception of their identity and to convince them of their daunting, perhaps unfulfillable, obligations. Badinter asserted that “Maternal love is a human feeling. And, like any feeling, it is uncertain, fragile, and imperfect. Contrary to many assumptions, it is not deeply rooted in women’s natures” (xxiii). Badinter argued that perceptions of mother love are culturally constructed and that the concept of motherhood was yet another manipulation of women and their conception of their place in the world. In her cultural analysis of the evolution of the ideals of motherhood in the United States, Diane Eyer (1996) made a similar point:

Motherhood, as most people think of it, was really fashioned in the 1830s as a response to the labor dilemma posed by the Industrial Revolution, which threatened to draw work out of the home and into the factory. Women should stay at home, it was decided, and become “hearth angels,” exemplars of moral virtue to inspire the children who were mere “clay” in their hands. (p. xiv)

Similar to Badinter’s specific historical point above, many authors have argued that motherhood is constructed not only for individual children but also for the larger social group in which they are situated (Arendell, 2000; Guendouzi, 2006; Hartman-Halbertal, 2002). Mothering is the main vehicle for identity formation of children (Arendell, 2000). In motherhood, children’s gender identities are reinforced and society, through its influence on the mother, creates its future citizens.

Arendell (2000) wrote that mothering is more important to women’s identity than either marital status or occupation. Living in an overwhelmingly family-focused society, in which being a mother is more important to one’s identity than being a lawyer, it is no wonder that women feel guilty about their motherhood (Arendell, 2000; Guendouzi, 2006). This maternal ambivalence is sourced in the paradoxical nature of mothering experience; not every minute with another individual can be close and happy, let alone one that is completely dependent upon you and with whom you are expected to spend every moment.

Motherhood can be an incredibly powerful identity for women, but Anna Snitow (1990) wondered if the patriarchal construction of motherhood “inevitably

placed women outside the realm of the social, the changing, the active” (p. 21). In other words, does placing motherhood on a pedestal isolate mothers from the experience of being people? If mothers gain power by being connected to the patriarchally-constructed, powerful spiritual identity of motherhood writ large, which is greater than themselves and defines them and their interests, it may also serve to silence them. Their inclusion in this archetypal class may detract from their individual voices. Despite the fact that all mothering is necessarily done by someone other than the child, psychological research generally only speaks from the child’s perspective (Hartman-Halbertal, 2002). When the mother is named in the conversation, she is brought in through the child’s experience—as powerfully good, bad, or silent. A mother reading these theories cannot find her own experience by reading the perspective of the child looking to the mother as a mirror.

Andrea Dworkin (1977), the controversial American feminist, saw women as trying to create power by positioning motherhood as the most important act that women could do. She warned of the pitfalls of what she called womb worship, valorizing women simply for their reproductive capacity while romanticizing the womb. On the one hand, this allows mothers to avoid the discomfort of modern-day expectations of doing it all by making their mothering into something that can seem all-encompassing and that can only be fulfilled by women. On the other hand, it locks women into the idea that the body is the source of destiny and identity, an idea that Dworkin saw as contributing to the history of women’s oppression over time, used to justify men’s domination over women because men are physically stronger.

Modern American society is hugely pronatalist, or valuing of motherhood, childbearing, children, and defined social roles for women (Brooks, 2007, p. 17). This pronatalist trend is often traced to a backlash from the Women’s Liberation movement of the 1970s (Daniluck, 1996; Hird & Abshoff, 2000; Lisle, 1996; Meyers, 2001; Morell, 2000). Parallel to the pronatalist agenda, childlessness is regarded as an affliction in modern America (Spitler, 1992). The concept that some women never want to have children seems to be drowned out in the debate about reproductive rights—which centers around the question of when women will have the children they are assumed eventually to have. Even though these attitudes are commonly thought to be a

response to the rise of feminism, some authors have suggested that feminism may have contributed to the pronatalist agenda by valorizing mothers’ experiences over those of non-mothers and suggesting that wars and human violence were due to male control and power. The notion that women naturally have a more nurturing instinct than men, and thus should be at home with children, is an example of biological determinism, the idea that biology is destiny.

Conclusion

Extensive research exists on the cultural and political phenomenon of the Christian Right, and research on fundamentalist women has begun to take hold, with several Christian groups opening themselves up to scholars and the mainstream media. Some research has been done on baalot teshuva, and so far it has concentrated on the process of identity transformation (Aviad, 1983; Glanz & Harrison, 1978), the recruitment process (Shaffir, 1983), gender issues (Davidman, 1991), and comparisons between different groups of returnees (Davidman, 1991; Davidman & Greil, 1994). While considerable effort has gone into studying the experiences of women in fundamentalist groups amid a recent resurgence in interest in traditional religion (Avishai, 2008), including conversion and transition experiences, a gap looms in the research as far as comparing the lived experience of changing between models of motherhood.

In a 2008 article, Avishai argued that women who participated in her study are neither passive targets of religious discourses (“doormats”), nor strategic agents whose observance serves extra-religious ends. Instead, she argued that their observance is “best explained by the notion of religious conduct as a mode of being, a performance of religious identity, or a path to achieving orthodox subjecthood in the context of threatened symbolic boundaries between [their religious and secular] identities” (p. 410). Avishai analyzed the extant academic literature about women in conservative fundamentalist religion and presented three main responses to the problem of women giving up agency by participating in such religious groups. The first response is that while women may experience conservative religions as restricting, they are also empowered or liberated by their religion. The second is that women subvert and resist official dogma through partial compliance, and lastly, that religious women strategize and appropriate religion to further extra-religious ends. These theoretical frames are all flawed: for example, such theories create a dichotomy

of subordination versus subversion, empowerment, or accommodation, which equates agency with resistance. These flawed theoretical frames reinscribe modern liberal values—researchers’ values—as being the only expression of true self, rather than allowing people to consciously choose which actions reflect their higher selves, or seeing the women’s current state as an expression of their true self.

These frameworks do not acknowledge that women may participate in a religion for a religious end, rather than an extra-religious one, or that compliance is not a strategy, but rather something that the women are choosing to do, a mode of conduct and being. Lastly, the focus on the women as individuals ignores the structural and cultural contexts that organize their lives and religious observance. Looking at religion as something that women do, parallel to gender as performance (Butler, 1990), or modes of behavior and comportment that are shaped by social rules, assumes that they are actively making religious choices. Agency is thus grounded in the very construction of gender. Butler in *Gender Trouble* located agency not only in acts of transgression, but also in the internal work one does to be able to receive a particular cultural discourse. Gender is understood as an unconscious performance, whereas Avishai (2008) proposed looking at “doing religion” as a “semiconscious, self-authorship project” (p. 411). This is particularly poignant in the case of adults who change religious communities, who exert agency and engage in self-reconstruction by choosing different cultural discourses to be subject to. They are engaging in the project of self-authorship by moving their protagonist, themselves, to a new location with new rules. This is a new, compelling paradigm that can examine fundamentalist women’s choices and affirm these choices through respectful research.

Models of motherhood remain important to study as they reflect cultural oughts (Hartman-Halbertal, 2002), and because of the unconscious way that one’s own childhood comes out in one’s parenting (Fraiberg et al., 1980). This is especially poignant in the case of people who change religious communities, as they deliberately choose to raise children with a different social group than that in which they were raised. They must navigate the oughts of their new society with their own psychodynamic issues arising through parenting. Though transpersonal psychology tends to pathologize fundamentalist religion, and the news histrionically

reports about the rise of fundamentalism in America as a source of terrorism, analysis is called for to deconstruct and analyze the fear expressed in research about the threat of fundamentalism. New research is also called for that re-examines what has often been seen as a regressive choice of modern women (Avishai, 2008; Longman, 2007), thus affirming the agency of women to choose a new cultural discourse. Such research may help create a fuller, more relatable understanding of fundamentalist women’s experiences of their identity, and particularly their experience of themselves as mothers, an identity that they, and society, see as most important.

The relationship of motherhood and religious experience are complicated mechanisms of intersecting identities, both important to transpersonal psychology. As cited in Fausto-Sterling (2000), Grosz pointed out that the “inner” and “outer” self co-construct themselves and each other, thus rejecting a nature or nurture model of development. While different disciplines study the outside and the inside of the Möbius strip, identities are one whole. In this case, the interaction of early environment to identity formation to religious transformation to creation of another person’s early environment (the women’s children, thus creating another identity) is all one whole.

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Notes

1. Some non-fundamentalist scholars have suggested that the movement's true beginnings lay with the Engel v. Vitale (June 25, 1962) Supreme Court case, which addressed prayer in public schools (Dierenfield, 2007). Still others, including Jerry Falwell, a televangelist and conservative commentator and founder of the Moral Majority, an evangelical Christian-oriented political lobbying organization, have pointed to a history beginning with Bob Jones University v. US (May 24, 1983), which addressed the tax-exempt status of a private,

nonprofit religious university that prescribed and enforced racially discriminatory admission standards on the basis of religious doctrine (Wagner, 2003; Wald & Siegelman, 1997).

2. The term “fundamentalism” is more highly controversial in application to Jews and is highly contested in academia (Longman, 2007). Watt (2008) wrote that the term fundamental as applied to Jews invokes supersessionism, the belief that Jesus’ death superseded the law of the Hebrew Bible, and re-inscribes that meaning when used today. He also contended that the term fundamentalism is simply used to describe someone seen as extreme or dangerous. Harris (1994) wrote extensively about the term, arguing that the type of textual reading that traditional Jewish culture engages in is considerably different from Christian fundamentalists. Additionally, the use of the word fundamentalist can be problematic when it includes Jews who are only politically and not religiously conservative, such as settlers in the Israeli occupied territories, who may not be considered fundamentalists simply based on their religious beliefs.
3. In the Six-Day War, Israel was attacked by the neighboring states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria with the help of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. The conflict lasted 6 days, between June 5 and June 10, 1967, and by the time it was over, Israel had gained control of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.

About the Author

Sophia Korb is a 5th year Clinical Psychology Ph.D. student at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California. She is working on her pre-doctoral clinical hours while employed as a Harm Reduction Specialist for Community Access, a person-centered social service agency in New York City that assists people with psychiatric disabilities to transition from shelters and institutions to independent living. She is writing two books for Whole Person Associates in the next year. Continuing work she began in graduate school, she researches and writes on the social and spiritual meanings of substance use with Jim Fadiman, as well as the efficacy of innovative housing programs in San Mateo County with Shelter Network.

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