

My Mother's Daughter, My Daughter's Mother: Intergenerational Conflict and Decision Making among Newly Orthodox Jewish Women

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Despite the increasing number of years that mothers and adult daughters now share, we have very little research addressing the parent-child relationship during those years. Perhaps this has to do with models which assume that socialization: is a universal process; occurs primarily in childhood; involves no negotiation between parents and children; is a one-way process from powerful to powerless; and that the successful transmission of values is represented by similar values and attitudes between parents and children, particularly in the areas of religion and politics. In this essay, I will raise some specific questions about the nature of adult mother-daughter relationships, as well as more general questions about intergenerational decision-making and socialization over the life-course.

Introduction

For mothers and daughters, most research has concentrated on caretaking at either end of the life span. Little is known about the quality and kind of relationships mothers and daughters share between childhood and old age. Yet, in one of few such studies, Baruch and Barnett (1983) found

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that during mid-life, a woman's sense of well-being is often inextricably connected with her perception of the quality of her relationship with her mother. Despite the increasing number of years that mothers and adult daughters now share, we have very little research addressing the parent-child relationship during those years. Perhaps this has to do with models which assume that socialization is a universal process, occurs primarily in childhood, involves no negotiation between parents and children, is a one-

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way process from powerful to powerless, and that the successful transmission of values is represented only by similar values and attitudes between parents and children, particularly in the areas of religion and politics. In this essay, I will raise some specific questions about the nature of adult, mother-daughter relationships, as well as more general questions about intergenerational decision-making and socialization over the life-course.

Using data gathered from 150 newly orthodox women for my book, *Rachel's Daughters* (1991), I have a subset of interviews which focus on the work histories of 50 baby-boom daughters and their mothers.¹ Embracing the fundamentalist arm of Judaism in their young adult years constitutes a major, often painful, break for these women from their parents and their past. For this reason, these newly orthodox Jewish women's retrospective accounts of their growing up years and their current decisions about work and family provide some insights about intergenerational conflict and decision making between young adult daughters and their mothers.

Adult Mother/Daughter Relationships *Dependence/Autonomy: Historical and Developmental Time*
Only recently, have mothers lived long enough to share a significant part of their adult lives with their daughters. In 1963, less than 25 percent of people over the age of 45 had a surviving parent. By 1980, however, 40 percent of those in their late fifties had a living parent (Barnett, 1990). Since women outlive men, it is very likely

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that the surviving parent is a mother. As Barnett notes, it is no longer unusual for an 80-year-old mother to have a 55-year-old daughter, who has a 30-year-old daughter, who, in turn, has a 5-year-old daughter (Barnett, 1990).

Perhaps the limited research on adult mother-daughter relationships results from our failure to delineate a clear theoretical or methodological approach to the study of parents and young-adult children. Erkut (1991) argues that adolescence is *not* a time for mutual understanding and reconciliation between most mothers and daughters. She reasons that since they are preparing to leave behind the dependency of childhood to assume adult responsibilities, adolescents' primary activity is to separate and distance themselves from their parents.

Erkut's argument rests on the theory that independence and autonomy are such high ideals in Western culture that an adolescent's search for selfhood is almost always done through differentiation. Seventy-five percent of the college-aged women she interviewed saw their mothers in an unfavorable, judgmental, and unflattering way. Erkut argues that in order for them to become independent, these young women focused on traits which they did not like in their mothers.

The theoretical framework for interpreting data about young-adult daughters and their mothers is conceptually limited. Ideas about dependency, for instance, are not sensitive to developmental and historical time. For example, assumptions about children's independence from parents reaching its apogee in young adulthood may be

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misleading. With the decrease in real mobility, in what some have come to call a postindustrial economy (Kaufman, 1991), contemporary youth are often facetiously referred to as the "boomerang" generation. Adolescence is limited to only the teen years, and as a time for identity formation and inevitable differentiation, assumes a universal and invariant process for all generations across the life-course.

But each generation must face its decision making process within its own sociocultural contexts. Consider, for example,

. the generational conflicts between mothers and daughters over the past few decades around such issues as education, career choices, birth control, and divorce. Each generation faces challenges and opportunities different from the preceding one. Babyboom mothers, like their daughters, often make decisions that turn the traditional theory underlying autonomy and independence on its head. As some researchers (Wood et al., 1984) have noted, when mothers and daughters interact as adults, it is the mother rather than the daughter who is most likely to be at a critical new stage in her development (going back to school, working out different relationships with her husband, helping an elderly parent, or recognizing her own mortality).

Socialization as Life-Course Negotiations

Theories about the socialization process often focus too narrowly on the specific kinds of interaction mothers and daughters have, rather than on the meaning and quality of those relationships (Wood et al., 1984). Gerontology studies, for instance,

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stress proximity, social support, and help patterns, rather than how mothers and daughters *feel* about those patterns. Similarly, we view the transmission of values and goals as a one-way flow of influence from parent to child. Such a frame-work fails to recognize the reciprocal influence of child on parent and thus underestimates the complex multidimensional aspects of intergenerational communication. The conventional approach to socialization fails to recognize the unintended consequences of intergenerational negotiation, the many levels of negotiation that take place, and the necessary reconstruction of meanings that occur in all interpersonal dynamics.

Typical research suggests that parentchild similarity (transmission) is most evident in young-adult children's religious and political lives. However, this approach to transmission is too limited. Such a

formulation ignores the negotiation that occurs between generations and underestimates the changes that political and religious institutions undergo from one generation to the next. By emphasizing parent-child transmission, the traditional concept of socialization minimizes the importance of significant others in children's lives. Such an approach assumes a fixed and invariant pattern for all parent-child relationships, regardless of socio-historical and class differences.

Ba 'alot teshuvah, by definition, have made radically different religious decisions and, by extension, often have assumed more conservative political views than those of their parents. Yet, closer inspection of the narratives these daughters tell suggests that

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their religious and political views may be closer to those of their parents than that which is readily apparent. Despite their radically different religious positions, many daughters believe that their choices are really extensions of their parents' value systems. If, for instance, the parents valued reasoning, self-determination, and independent behavior for their children from an early age, then religious-political differences between parents and daughters may reflect a successful transmission of the values

'associated with independent decision making. In this sense, seemingly discordant political and religious decision making between the generations may actually be evidence of positive value transmission from one generation to the other.

Some daughters believe that their adult choices are congruent with the implicit messages they received as children from their parents. How, for instance, if one's parents had any Jewish ethnic identification, could one ever grow up to be too identified as a Jew? Too involved in ritual and religious practice? And finally, the assumption that only parents are key to political and religious identification underestimates the effects of adult, peer groups, spouses, and in-laws. Certainly, even if their behavioral choices were similar, the meaning of such behavior might be interpreted quite differently by each generation. Orthodox Judaism might represent something quite different to a generation of suburbanites reared in a post World War II economy than to an earlier generation for whom Orthodoxy was most associated with poverty and ghettoization.

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Meaning of Mother/Daughter Differences

By becoming more sensitive to the time and timing of life events in our theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of young adult and parent relationships, we might come to understand more fully how contemporary mothers and daughters create and structure the meanings of their mutual relationships. For example, in her data on baby-boom mothers and their daughters, Fischer (1986) conjectures that when daughters marry and have children they reorder their relationships with their mothers. Fischer argues for an increased role complementarity between the two now that they have motherhood in common.

But does this necessarily follow? What are the areas of common interest between adult mothers and daughters? Are mothers only similar to their daughters in their roles as mothers? Are baby-boom mothers only and predominantly mothers to their adult daughters? If, as I suggested earlier, the mothers themselves are moving out of and into different stages of life, how does this affect their relationships with their daughters? In some ways, might it not decrease role complementarity? Furthermore, do mothers of young children share that much in common with mothers of adult children? Doesn't mothering change over the life course?

Perhaps we have assumed too much about mothering and the role of mothering in the lives of contemporary middle-aged and older women! Indeed, Cohler and Grunebaum (1981) report that the greater the number of family and social ties among a group of older women, the lower the

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measures of positive morale and adjustment (p. 233). Fischer (1986) notes that daughters miss mothers more than mothers miss daughters; and, even more interesting, daughters describe their mothers as lonely, although mothers do not express such feelings. Do idealized and stereotypical understandings about parenting or grandparenting miss how some aspects of those roles may be a source of discomfort?

Fischer notes that interviews with adult daughters and their mothers show that contradictions appear within the very same relationship. She writes that such relationships can be simultaneously distant and close, peer-like and parental (1986:63). Rather than choosing between options, Fischer characterizes the mother-daughter

relationships she describes as simultaneously "holding on and letting go" (p. 63).

Concepts of differentiation and identification require some rethinking as well. Perhaps, as Cohler and Grunebaum (1981: 35) suggest, a lack of differentiation between mothers and daughters is not necessarily an indication of pathology but rather "*the adaptation each generation has made to the continuing closeness of mother and daughter.*" And when we speak of identification, are we referring to subjective, behavioral, or emotional aspects?

Socialization represents a continuing process into and through adulthood. It involves agency and continual negotiation with parents and others (see Kaufman and Richardson, 1982). Bengston and Black write:

Relations between generations are (to be) seen as a continuous bilateral negotiation in which the young and the old exchange information and influence from their respective positions in developmental and historical time (cited in Wood et al., 1984:227).

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Intergenerational Conflict among Newly Orthodox Jewish Women

Tlze Women

The women I studied (Kaufman, 1991) were part of the beginning and the end of the baby-boom generation. Many came from middle-class backgrounds, were well educated, and assimilated into the secular culture. Almost 80 percent either had some years of college or a degree when they "returned" to Orthodox Judaism. Seventy percent had at least one parent working in a professional or manager-proprietor category of occupation while they were growing up. A little over 50 percent had at least one parent with education beyond an undergraduate college degree. Most of them had only a rudimentary Hebraic or religious background during their formative years, with only one-fifth having had more than a Sunday School education. Sixty-four percent of the women were between twenty and twenty-five years of age at the time of their "return."² On the whole, this group closely approximates the profile of Jews in America generally and of newly orthodox Jews as it is currently emerging. Most of the women were not married at the time of their return to Jewish orthodoxy. fifteen had been divorced and ten were engaged to be married.

Sewlar Relativism

For all the women in this study the re-

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turn to Orthodox Judaism constitutes a conscious rejection of secular culture and the relativism of modern living. Most *ba'a/ot tesluvalz* describe themselves as trying to make moral sense of their lives. As they told their stories of return, women reported a common experience:¹ that their lives had been spiritually empty and without purpose before their return. Regardless of age, virtually all women suggested that they were searching and some labeled that quest a journey homeward. I was to find some irony in that designation, for although it initially implied that they were seeking their roots as Jews, it also served as a metaphor for what orthodoxy means to them-home, family, and a moral community with clear dictates about how to live both one's public and private life.¹ Their return to orthodoxy, in some fundamental way, constitutes a protest against secular society, a society many characterized as masculine in orientation and organization.

These women exhibited a strong antipathy toward all forms of self-consuming and self-interested behavior. Many complained of the superficiality, phoniness and self-centeredness of middle-class American culture. If a crisis in meaning had sent many of them in search of a pattern of personal and social relationships steeped in an ethical tradition of moral certitude, Jewish orthodoxy provided them with clear ethical guidelines and historic and transcendental ties. These women articulate emphatically the basic parameters of the modern dilemma. They claim that the beginning of adulthood came when they had to make independent decisions about the direction their lives

would take. For most of them, the most anxiety-provoking decisions were those that affected the way in which they were to live their personal lives as women-as lovers, mothers, wives, and friends. The issues surrounding those choices and the search to discover upon what grounds to make those kinds of intimate and personal decisions dominated the discussions of their returns to orthodoxy. One

woman claimed she wanted "official values" and relief from her "existential despair." For these women, Orthodox Judaism was a haven in a valueless world.

Family of Origin Tensions

Many *ba 'at tesluvalz* rejected the lifestyles, and in many cases, the political values and principles of their parents. Ten of the women interviewed were once "reddiaper" babies, coming from families where both parents were "old lefties." They wanted a well-articulated set of beliefs that transcended a political analysis, as one of them suggested, of the "here and now." For others, it was a rejection of what they called the "shallow" and "phony" lifestyles some had come to associate with middle-class suburban living. And for still others, it was simply an extension of what they believed their parents already had committed themselves to, as in the case of those who had come from conservative Jewish backgrounds.

Whatever their stated reasons and motivations-and these are at best reconstructed explanations-it is clear that these newly orthodox Jews are committed to something different from what they experienced while

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growing up. They have made choices different from *those* of their parents. Since their current life patterns often are dramatically different from their growing up years, tensions with families of origin are inevitable. One ultra-orthodox woman reported that after *the birth* of her third child in four years, her mother, who is a lawyer, shouted to her:

Take that sillnatah (yiddish jar rag, which in this case refers to the scary the woman is wearing to cover her head for modesty reasons) off your head and use the talent you have for thinldng, not babymldng. Is this why we spent so much money on your Ivy League education? (cited in Kaufman, 1991:19).

While it is somewhat easier for families of *those* who are not ultra-orthodox to relate to their children, the tensions are still clearly there. The laws of kashruth (keeping kosher) and other ritual practices are often as foreign to women's parents as they were to the newly orthodox women when *they* first embraced orthodoxy. Dietary laws are particularly troublesome for *these* family relationships. Visits between newly orthodox Jewish women and their families are generally limited to times when eating or celebrating holidays is not necessary. This, of course, is particularly difficult for the mothers of the *ba 'alot teshuvah* who often see cooking and baking for their children as one of their primary grandmotherly contributions. It is also difficult for daughters who do not live in *the same city* as their families of origin.

One newly orthodox Jewish woman

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(modern orthodox) noted that she and her family visited with her parents at least once a year. But she recognized with some sadness that *the visits* were growing more difficult. She laments:

We have to drive, not fly, because we have to bring our own utensils and our own food. We cannot visit over the weekends or Jewish holidays because we will not drive on Shabbat (Sabbath) or on vom to vim (holidays). We also then have to explain to the children why Grandma and Grandpa use the lights on Shabbat, heat the food, and ride in a car. You can imagine how difficult it is for us. We don't want to hurt my parents, but of course it is inevitable. My mother loves to cook and tries to buy the right food and alt, but it almost always presents a problem.

The twists on generational conflict and decision making are evident. Although this daughter has become a mother, the reordering of her relationship with her mother has not necessarily reached the kind of consensus Fischer envisions when she speaks of "role complementarity,"

. For seven *ba 'alot teshuvah*, at least one parent or one set of in-laws has "converted" to orthodoxy. Again, unconventional intergenerational dynamics appear when children teach their parents religious values. This is similar to Fischer's claims that relationships between parents and adult children may become at once both "parental and peerlike," or Bengtson and Black's claims that some "bilateral negotiation" (cited in Wood, 1984:235) may occur. Although

some parents have accommodated their children's orthodoxy by changing their household patterns when their children visit, or by converting to orthodoxy themselves, others remain openly hostile and disapproving. As one perceptive young woman said:

"By becoming orthodox, my parents feel I am saying to them, 'I am a better Jew than you are'"
(cited in Kaufman, 1991:120).

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Although I do not have oral data from the mothers of these newly orthodox women, perspectives from baby-boom mothers, and even their mothers, can be found in the oral histories of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters of ethnic, American women. In

her collection of oral histories, Krause

(1991) tape recorded interviews with three generations of ethnic, American women. The following quote is from a Jewish grandmother speaking about one of her granddaughters who is ultra-orthodox:

My granddaughter Nancy and her husband are Lubavitchers (ultra-orthodox). They are very religious, which I am not a hundred percent with. I'm sorry because they have to miss so many lovely things in life on account of their being so religious. Nancy's mother had a thirtieth anniversary; they couldn't stay for the dinner because they couldn't eat unkosher food. And little Esther can't stay with her or her grandmother-I hate to see her miss so much enjoyment. It's hard for me to understand how people can be so obsessed with religion. For myself, I like to be more modern, like we are, like her parents are I

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believe that you should enjoy your religion, not punish yourself with your religion. I have a very rich, happy life. I enjoy being a Jew and I enjoy the comforts of a good life (dted in Krause, 1991 :98-99).

Here the older generation represents itself as more liberated than the younger generation. Certainly in this case, a linear progression from traditional to modern may not be appropriate in analyzing intergenerational dynamics.

Although the arrival of grandchildren may soften some attitudes, it frequently presents problems as well. One mother claims her daughter asks her each time they visit her mother, "Why does Bobie (grandmother in yiddish) wear pants?" (modesty rules prohibit women from dressing like men). Since honoring one's parents is a valued norm in the Orthodox community, the issues are complicated for many of these women. Not surprisingly, those issues that create the greatest tensions are those which are of critical importance to these women. Trying to find neutral areas of communication and visitation are almost impossible. The very attitudes that separate these women from the secular world are the same that separate them from their parents, and in particular, the women from their mothers. Despite "creative compromises" (one young woman still goes shopping for furniture with her mother), one woman admits that her relationship with her mother still is the most troubling part of her life. As she says, "*I have come to accept the fact that we will never share our lives in the important*

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ways." I believe the acceptance of intractable differences between the generations is an important recognition shared by many of the daughters.

Weakened ties with their families of origin make many women feel even more deeply connected to the religious community and to one another. Often they will use an older woman as a guide and role model. They rely on women within the orthodox community, especially other newly orthodox Jewish women, for their primary friendships and activities. In fact, many of these communities resocialize recruits by providing "new" families or sponsors for them. Since many of these recruits are just coming into their young adult years and often have rejected the values of their families, such "protifamilies" are quite successful and influential. Such a strategy emphasizes the limitations of our concepts about role modeling. We need to consider the number of other role models beyond the family of origin that are available to youngadult women when they become mothers and wives.¹

The realignment of traditional support systems from the family of origin to the "familial" support group is particularly important for *ba'alot teshuvah*, since they have made choices which entail a radical restructuring of their lives. One *ba'alot teshuvah* spoke of how she turns to the community, especially in time of need.

You know I cannot depend on my family to help me when I cannot do the cooking and caring. You see, my family is not orthodox, do not understand the laws of knthruth, and probably more they are

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angry with me for making it so difficult for each of us to spend much time with one another ... When I had my last baby, my mother made it really clear to me how she felt. "If you expect me to come help you and take time from my work, you are wrong. You made your bed, now lie in it." I know she cares, but she really is angry with me (cited in Kaufman, 1991:99-100).

But do we know how mothers feel? Can we trust their daughters' understanding? Earlier, I noted that Fischer reports that daughters miss their mothers more than their mothers miss them and that mothers do not express feelings of loneliness, although their daughters claim that their mothers are lonely (Fischer, 1986:63).

Here is a mother from Krause's oral histories describing how good she feels about her married children, and then she adds the following:

But the best part-Jesse [her husband] and I were just talking about it. It's when the two of us are together, especially when we go to our apartment in Florida. I can't tell you how exciting it is when the plane lands there, to know that all we have to worry about is each other. It's beautiful. To make dinner down there with just the two of us, without the responsibilities of a big house, just with an apartment. Knowing that the only thing we have to worry about is where to play golf or whether to go to the beach. I love the time we have together (cited in Krause, 1989: 100).

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Intergenerational Decision 1\\Taking Among Newly orthodox Jewish 1-Women

Baby-boom mothers differ significantly from their own mothers and in general from their daughters. They married earlier," had their first child sooner, had larger families, and as a group experienced less divorce. Due to the GI bill, they came to maturity during the only period in this century when women's education did not keep pace with those of men (Modell, 1989). However, even during those family-centered decades, it is clear that tensions were building:

... as early marriage came to be in some tension with a declining romantic motive, and childbearing became correspondingly more focal to marriages, a contradiction developed between the felt economic needs of the young couple and the wish to become parents A fair amount of the growing consumer prosperity of the postwar had been premised on the capacity of young wives to earn second incomes. Young wives were encouraged to work, but they were culturally expected to be full-time mothers when children came (Modell, 1989:261).

Despite the Parsonsian model of a fulltime breadwinning husband and full-time homemaking mother, the trend in the 1950s was toward greater participation in the paid labor force for wives with young children. In 1950, 11.9 percent of women with children under six were in the labor force; by 1959 it was 18.7 percent (Modell, 1989: 261). Although employment was arranged around the demands of family and concentrated in the female-dominated service

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sector, one-third of American women were employed outside the home at the peak of the baby boom. What messages were mothers of this generation giving their daughters about paid work, homemaking, and marriage? More important, how did their daughters interpret those messages?

In her study of baby-boom mothers and their daughters; Fischer (1986) reports that only a few mothers in her sample pursued careers for most of their lives. Even successful, professional mothers espoused a very "traditional" ideology of motherhood. One such mother reports: *Working or not -I do all the cooking, cleaning ...*" (p. 112). Therefore; even professionally involved mothers tended to see their family roles as their central commitment.

Fischer also reports that although daughters may indicate more career orientation than their mothers, they, too, accord motherhood a clear priority in their lives. Most daughters-with or without childrenand

most of their mothers, express a preference that women not work or not work full-time when they have small children. Few mothers in Fischer's study encouraged daughters to work full time. One daughter whose mother did encourage her to do so reflects on it this way:

In some ways it was different for her because attitudes have changed. I don't think she [referring to her mother] had a choice about going back to work when I was young I think she really would have liked to have a career now. I think she sees it as-if I don't get back in now I may never (Fischer, 1986: 111).

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What effects mothers' decisions and feelings about work have upon their daughters is difficult to assess. Although there has been a continual increase in the demand and need for women of all kinds to participate in the paid labor force, what does this increased participation in the labor force mean when it is not accompanied by significant changes in the social arrangements of the home? Women still have the primary responsibility for children and for coordinating children's lives, even in so-called egalitarian families (Fox and Hesse-Biber, 1984).

The findings from my sample of motherdaughter pairs on the issue of work offers some unexpected comparisons between the generations. Unfortunately, the original study did not focus on or include mothers in the interviews. Therefore, beyond the anecdotal data I have already related, I have to rely upon daughters' retrospective accounts in both the interviews and the questionnaire data. For this chapter I use only data of matched mother and daughter pairs at approximately the same stage of the life cycle. And while we cannot generalize from these data to the population as a whole, I believe the findings raise some interesting questions about the framework from which we can view mother-daughter relationships and decision making.

First, 64 percent of these mothers and daughters were currently employed in the labor force. Of this group the mothers did and the daughters intended to continue working, even with children under the age of 18 years. I divided the mother/daughter pairs into four groups: working mothers

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with daughters who worked and did not work; and non-working mothers with daughters who worked and did not work. Of all the pairs, non-working mothers and nonworking daughters were the least likely, representing only 12 percent of the sample. Working mothers and working daughters were the most likely pair (40%). The remaining pairs (working mothers and nonworking daughters and non-working mothers with working daughters) were evenly split, with 24 percent of the sample in each category (see Table 1). Just a little under half (46%) of the sample of motherdaughter pairs made the same kind of choices about work at the same lifecycle stage. Therefore, mothers and daughters were just as likely to be similar as dissimilar in their decisions about paid labor force participation.

Moreover, when both were working at the same lifecycle stage, mothers and daughters tended to work at similar kinds of jobs.

Interesting comparisons emerge when we look more closely at the data. For instance, when comparing working mother and daughter pairs, both mothers and daughters tended to be in female-dominated jobs. However, working mothers of currently non-working daughters were more likely than other working mothers to be in male-dominated jobs (e.g., lawyer, data analyst, philosophy professor, business administrator). Moreover, the currently non-working daughters of working mothers were more likely than any of the other daughters to have postponed their work because of children and were more likely to be currently enrolled in school. Virtually all of these

Percent of Mothers and Daughters Working

Daughters

Not working Working Totals

Not Working

12 % (6) 24 % (12) 36% (18)

Mothers Working

24% (12) 40% (20) 64 % (32)

Total

36 % (18) 64% (32) 100 % (50)

daughters intended to work after their youngest child is in school full time. If they did not intend to retrain, many claimed they would go back into the labor force in jobs more to their liking. Therefore, non-working daughters (of working mothers in male-dominated jobs) were almost all virtually committed to the labor force, but not at the same lifecycle stage as their mothers. But perhaps most striking is this: working daughters of *full-time homemaking mothers* were the most likely to work in male-dominated jobs or specialties (e.g., lawyer, chemist, computer analyst, research scientist, administrator for health care unit, administrative social worker, etc.); were the most committed to the labor force; were the most excited about their jobs; and were the most likely to claim that they could combine mothering and employment. Non-working daughters of working mothers in male-dominated jobs were almost all committed to the labor force, but only after their youngest child was in school and, for a significant number, only after they were able to receive more schooling or training. Although repre~

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senting only six cases, the data for full-time homemaking mothers and daughters at the same lifecycle stage find those mothers heavily into unpaid labor as volunteers or in avocations such as art, music, or theater. These full-time homemaker daughters were the most likely to claim they never want to work.

Some of these findings seem counterintuitive. Why would daughters of working mothers in male-dominated jobs be the most likely *not* to be working at the same Jifecycle stage as their mothers (although intending to work in the future in other than female-dominated jobs or specialties), while the daughters of full-time homemaking mothers are the *most* likely to be in the labor force in male-dominated jobs? Do working mothers in male-dominated jobs give their daughters the sense that it is too much to try to manage both home and career when children are young? Do fulltime homemaking mothers who truly wish to be at home full time give their working daughters a message that choosing what they want to do is important in decision

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making? For those full-time homemakers who choose to do unpaid work in the home or volunteer work, is the message to their non-working daughters (who do not wish to ever work) that women cannot succeed in the public sphere or that full-time homemaking is the best women can and should do?

We might speculate that it is not employment per se, but rather satisfaction with one's job;" either as a full-time homemaker or worker, that is picked up by daughters and used as a guide for possibilities in their own lives. Perhaps daughters of successful professional mothers felt that combining careers and homemaking was too strenuous and decided, therefore, to do each, but to do so sequentially rather than simultaneously. In this sense, they may not be rejecting their mothers' lifestyles, but tampering with the timing of events. On the other hand, we could conjecture that working mothers are but one small part of their daughters' decision to work, to retrain, or even to educate themselves. Certainly husbands, adult friends, and perhaps even inlaws are influential in such decisions.

Without data from the mothers, it is difficult to know the answers. However, letters written by some baby-boom mothers to Betty Friedan, after the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), may offer some insights. Although almost all of the letters were written in praise of the book (applauding Friedan for identifying that problem with "no name"), many suggest that Friedan's characterization of babyboom mothers did *not* match their own lives.

For instance, what was most surprising were the number of letters (selectively sampled by me from the year 1964) from women already entrenched in the labor force or getting ready to re-enter. The letters include those from: a mother of three in medical school (May 14); a mother who is an engineer (Niay 14); a mother going back to school now that her oldest is in college and her youngest in kindergarten (May 15); a woman going back for her Ph.D. in English (May 29); and from a mother of twins who is a dog breeder (September). Some women write of being caught in a trap, but the trap they refer to is an "economic booby trap" as one woman refers to it (May 6). Another woman warns of falling victim to the Puritan work ethic (June 5); and yet, another argues for sharing the drudgery, not pushing it onto others (May 5). One woman warns Friedan not to worry as much about mundane quality of domesticity but about the atomic age and the Cold War (June 8). A doctor who practiced during the war writes to Friedan to let her know that there were women in the labor force in demanding jobs (November 4); and another writes to let her know of the fulfillment attached to being a volunteer for such things as sisterhoods, LWV, and Bnai Brith (June 7). There are letters from working mothers expressing guilt about working¹ and asking the ages of Friedan's children (April 27).

How then do we interpret mothering in the 1950s? Clearly, there were a variety of mothering experiences. While most of the women writing to Friedan agree with her analysis of the "feminine mystique," a good

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number of those who chose to write did not believe that they were living such a life. Indeed, as Modell's (1989) data suggest, despite the ideology, many women were working or retraining for work while their baby-boom daughters were growing up.

Like the daughters in my study, many baby-boom daughters had mothers who may have preached the priorities of mothering, but who nonetheless worked. The majority of the newly orthodox Jewish women, although having taken radically different religious stances, look in many ways similar to _ their baby-boom mothers. They have joined a community where women, like their mothers, marry earlier, have more children, and experience less divorce. Given that women are still held primarily responsible for domestic chores and child care, we can place these baby-boomers in the context of a work/family system that is, as it has been, still geared for the lives that men lead (Kaufman, 1989).

Currently non-working daughters of mothers in male-dominated *jobs* may have interpreted their mothers' work experiences to be too demanding to combine with childrearing. On the other hand~ full-time homemaking mothers may not have offered their working adult-daughters firsthand experiences of the struggle between demanding jobs outside the home and those within it. Therefore, their daughters may not have perceived the combination of career and domesticity to be problematical. In comparison, mothers who worked in female-dominated jobs met both the demands of family and work, since most of those professions were geared to making the home

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the priority. Their working daughters, as the data show, may have decided to take the same route. Full-time working mothers who did unpaid work at home (avocation or volunteer) may have transmitted the message that domestic work is all that women should or can do. In either case, their daughters agree (for whatever reasons) that full-time homemaking is what they also want. The data, of course, do not allow us to know which, if any, of the above reasons are the basis for the apparent identification or differentiation of daughters with their mothers on issues surrounding mothering and paid labor force participation.

The discrepancies between ideology and behavior for the baby-boom mothers makes it possible that daughters, if modeling at all, responded to the many and sometimes ambivalent messages their mothers may have given them during their developmental years. What is clear is this: For both mothers and daughters, children are a priority in their lives. In my book, I argue that the newly orthodox Jewish women's religious conversations are as much about a reclaiming of mothering and a revaluing of the female, as they are about religion. Therefore, this group of baby-boomers, coming into their mothering years in the late 1970s and early 1980s, are very similar, even if they do not identify with the religious and political values and priorities of their baby-boom mothers.

Conclusion

I'd like to conclude with some of the concerns with which I began. There is a clear need for more research on adult

mothers and daughters (on adult parents and children, for that matter). While no single method is best suited to study such relationships, it is clear that the complexities and ambivalences characteristic of motherdaughter relationships need a method sensitive to historical and life course time and timing. While we can generalize from different time periods, even cross-sectional and longitudinal data must be flexible in construct and framework if they are to yield the kind of findings that indicate how mothers and daughters really live their lives and make their decisions. If we adhere to bipolar, oppositional, and linear terms to describe developmental stages or events, it is hard to develop scales that measure with any accuracy the complexities of terms such as close and distant, differentiation and identification between parents and their children. And even the term stage or course has come under attack. Gilligan et al. (1989) speak of a change necessary in the developmental literature, if we are to move beyond such problems. For instance, Gilligan et al. argue that we must move from describing stages in terms of steps, positions, and levels (hierarchy), to a musical language of theme and counterpoint. For now, however, until we orchestrate such a symphony of ideas and methods, we will have to console ourselves with sharing bits and pieces of the sketchy melody we have learned in connection with parents and children and intergenerational decision making.

Family Perspective

Endnotes

[]. Several methods were used to locate respondents. Interviews with leading rabbis, lay community leaders, and known ba'alot teshuvah (the plural feminine in Hebrew for newly orthodox Jewish women) in each of five major urban cities across the United States during the mid-1980s helped locate newly orthodox women within three identifiable frameworks in contemporary orthodoxy-modern orthodox (25), strictly orthodox (40), and ultraorthodox (85). No claims are made that the women under study were randomly drawn as a sample of a defined universe, nor can the interviewed be considered statistically representative of those who return to orthodoxy or of orthodoxy itself.

The term *teshuvah* can be translated in several ways. In the case of *ba 'alot teshuvah* it is meant to convey a "return to the past." The past can represent one's own past or one's ancestral past. It can also mean an abrupt change or turning. Since most of these women had never been orthodox, "return," in the literal sense, is a misnomer.

In Fischer's study (1986:84-85), college-educated daughters were four times more likely than the less-educated daughters to say that they had other adults as role models.

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