Trust resistance and Distrust-

A case study Israeli Ultra-Orthodox women Studying in a Secular College

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In the past few decades Haredi women in Israel have emerged from their communities to study and work in secular environments. Academic studies are perceived as representing secular values such equality, freedom, and liberalism, which are foreign to Haredi communities. The study I conducted and which I would like to present, centers on the ways in which the women deal with unfamiliar values in an academic culture that may instill them with doubt regarding accepted norms, or a desire to express private needs, thereby causing tension among most women and challenging fundamental, perseverance-meriting principles of Haredi culture.

This qualitative research study examines the Haredi women who completed an undergraduate BA degree in education. The study enhances our understanding of the conditions that encourage these women to study in unfamiliar surroundings, as well as those that hinder their studies. Data were collected from structured interviews with 38 Haredi students. This endeavor to follow and understand the influence of secular discourse and people on their professional identities discovers two major social strands, which can be understood as different strategy of hidden and active resistance: the creation of trust through commitment to the learning process, and the overcoming of suspicion of the secular world, which might potentially adversely affect this learning process. The understanding that has been deciphered can aid in understanding the complex world of these students, and consequently in building an educational framework appropriate to the needs of diverse and varied students.