

Southern Methodist University

SMU Scholar

Religious Studies Theses and Dissertations

Religious Studies

Spring 5-18-2019

Infertility in 1 Samuel 1: Toward a Hermeneutic of Reproduction

David A. Schones

Southern Methodist University, dschones@smu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.smu.edu/religious_studies_etds



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schones, David A., "Infertility in 1 Samuel 1: Toward a Hermeneutic of Reproduction" (2019). *Religious Studies Theses and Dissertations*. 14.

https://scholar.smu.edu/religious_studies_etds/14

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Religious Studies at SMU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Religious Studies Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of SMU Scholar. For more information, please visit <http://digitalrepository.smu.edu>.

INFERTILITY IN 1 SAMUEL 1:
TOWARD A HERMENEUTIC OF REPRODUCTION

Approved by:

Prof. Susanne Scholz
Professor of Old Testament

Prof. Roy L. Heller
Professor of Old Testament

Prof. Harold J. Recinos
Professor of Church and Society

Prof. Timothy Sandoval
Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible

INFERTILITY IN 1 SAMUEL 1:
TOWARD A HERMENEUTIC OF REPRODUCTION

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of

Dedman College

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

with a

Major in Religious Studies

by

David A. Schones

B.A., University of Oklahoma; M.T.S., Brite Divinity School

May 18, 2019

Copyright (2019)

David A. Schones

All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many colleagues who have helped me reach this point in my research. I am sure that I will not be able to thank them all. Still, I would like to recognize some who have offered their support, advice, and expertise on this project. I especially want to thank my advisor and dissertation committee chair, Susanne Scholz. Your tireless effort and willingness to work with me has profoundly shaped my research, my academic career, and my life. You challenged me to become a better scholar, you made me focus on the important aspects of my research, and you have helped me turn an idea into a hermeneutic of reproduction. It has been a great honor to have the opportunity to collaborate with you. I appreciate everything you have done. I would also like to thank members of my dissertation committee, Roy L. Heller, Harold J. Recinos, and Timothy Sandoval. You have all given me excellent advice, read early drafts of my chapters, and offered feedback on my research. I cannot thank all of you enough for helping shape this project.

Additionally, I want to thank Meghan Henning and Chris de Wet, chairs of the Healthcare and Disability in the Ancient World program unit of the Society of Biblical Literature. The opportunity to give two presentations on my dissertation proposal and Chapter 5 has been very helpful during this process. I appreciate the feedback on my proposal offered by Laurel W. Koepf-Taylor. You gave me excellent advice during the early part of this project. I want to thank my colleagues in the graduate program of religious studies at Southern Methodist University. You have all offered wonderful feedback on my work both inside and outside the classroom. I also want to thank John R. Levison and Serge Frolov for their roles in helping me

reach this point in my career. Additionally, I want to thank the Dedman College Graduate Student Assembly at Southern Methodist University that provided a research grant for this dissertation.

Finally, I could not have gotten to this point without the support and help of my wife, Courtney. You have given me the chance to pursue this opportunity. Thank you for listening to my constant discussion on biblical infertility, keeping me motivated as I worked, and helping me deal with the stress of this project. I also wish to thank my two children, Hannah and Joseph. You have kept me grounded, reminded me to take breaks, and helped me enjoy every day. Finally, I want to thank my extended family. You have all helped Courtney and me with our children during the past few years. You have been a wonderful support system that has helped make this dissertation possible. Thank you so much.

Schones, David A.

B.A., University of Oklahoma; M.T.S., Brite Divinity School

Infertility in 1 Samuel 1:
Toward a Hermeneutic of Reproduction

Advisor: Professor Susanne Scholz

Doctor of Philosophy conferred May 18, 2019

Dissertation completed May 2, 2019

This dissertation explores the need for an interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 that is grounded in social-scientific scholarship on infertility. The study analyzes biblical interpretations on 1 Samuel 1 in the five decades that feminist-disability scholarship on infertility has emerged in the social sciences. Accordingly, the exegetical readings analyzed in this study were produced in the same time frame during which feminist-disability scholarship began to be articulated in earnest. The study demonstrates the necessity for interpreting 1 Samuel 1 with social-scientific research on infertility in mind. If such scholarship is not taken into account, biblical readings remain stuck in outdated terminology and uninformed assumptions about Hannah's involuntary childlessness.

Social-scientific scholarship has produced four models on infertility that need to inform the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. The models are the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models. Employing the four models, the study shows that Hannah's infertility is stigmatized on familial and personal levels. It also demonstrates that involuntary childlessness must be understood within its cultural-literary context. The study challenges the economic and religious explanations for Hannah's infertility and counters biblical interpretations that view her involuntary childlessness as caused by economic distress, misfortune, or God. Most importantly, the application of the four models develops a reading centered on Hannah as an infertile woman.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Infertility and 1 Samuel 1: An Introduction	1
1.1	Five Reasons for a Hermeneutic of Reproduction: The Present State of the Problem	4
1.2	From Barrenness to Infertility: Biblical and Social-Scientific Terms for Childlessness....	8
1.2.1	Barrenness: A Critique of the Biblical Term	8
1.2.2	Infertility, Involuntary Childlessness, and Child-Free: Social-Scientific Terms.....	11
1.2.3	Infertility and Involuntary Childlessness: Issues of Terminology	13
1.3	The Ideological-Critical Evaluation of Infertility: Issues of Method	13
1.4	Social-Scientific Models for the Study of Infertility: A Brief Overview	16
1.5	Towards a Hermeneutic of Reproduction: Chapter Outlines.....	18
2	Historical-Critical and Literary Interpretations of “Barrenness” in 1 Samuel 1.....	22
2.1	Historical-Critical Interpretations Based on the Economic Category.....	24
2.1.1	Infertility as a Problem to the Patrilineal System: The Interpretation of Peter R. Ackroyd	24
2.1.2	Infertility as a Symbol for Israel’s Suffering: The Interpretation of James D. Newsome	27
2.1.3	Infertility and Economic Exploitation in India: The Interpretation of Gnana Robinson	29
2.2	Historical-Critical Interpretations Based on the Religious Category	31
2.2.1	God’s Power over Infertility: The Interpretation of P. Kyle McCarter	32
2.2.2	Infertility and the Broken Covenant: The Interpretation of Walter Brueggemann..	34
2.2.3	Critique of the Judges Cycle: The Interpretation of Feidhlimidh T. Magennis.....	36
2.3	Literary Interpretations Based on the Economic Category.....	38

2.3.1 The Psychological Profiles of Hannah’s Family: The Interpretation of J. P. Fokkelman	39
2.3.2 An Anthropological Analysis of Infertility: The Interpretation of Philip Esler.....	41
2.3.3 Infertility and the Annunciation Type-Scene: The Interpretation of Robert Alter ..	43
2.4 Literary Interpretations Based on the Religious Category.....	45
2.4.1 Deconstructing Retributive Theology: The Interpretation of Peter D. Miscall	46
2.4.2 Infertility and the Artistry of the Deuteronomist: The Interpretation of Robert Polzin	47
2.4.3 Infertility and Character Development: The Interpretation of John Petersen.....	50
2.5 Beyond the Biblical Rhetoric of “Barrenness” in 1 Samuel 1: A Conclusion.....	52
3 Disability and Feminist Interpretations of Infertility in 1 Samuel 1.....	55
3.1 Disability Interpretations of Infertility: Hannah as a Disabled Woman	56
3.1.1 The Proto-Medical Treatment of Infertility: The Interpretation of Hector Avalos .	57
3.1.2 Infertility as a Culturally-Mandated Disability: The Interpretation of Jeremy Schipper	59
3.1.3 Normalizing Hannah’s Infertility: The Interpretation of Joel S. Baden	61
3.2 Feminist “Depatriarchalizing” Interpretations of Infertility: Hannah as a Childless Woman.....	64
3.2.1 God’s Compassion Toward Infertile Women: The Interpretation of Phyllis Tribble	65
3.2.2 Infertility as the Communal Suffering of Israel: The Interpretation of Mary Callaway	67
3.2.3 Historical Reconstruction of Female Infertility: The Interpretation of Jo Ann Hackett.....	70
3.3 Feminist “Rejectionist” Interpretations of Infertility: Hannah as a Patriarchal Tool	73
3.3.1 The Paradox of Infertility in Biblical Literature: The Interpretation of J. Cheryl Exum.....	73

3.3.2 Possession of Hannah: The Interpretation of Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn.....	76
3.3.3 Hannah as an “Ideal” Mother in Patriarchal Society: The Interpretation of Esther Fuchs	78
3.4 Feminist-Disability Studies and the Hermeneutic of Reproduction: A Conclusion	80
4 Social-Scientific Models for the Study of Infertility	82
4.1 The Conceptualization Category: The Social Constructionist and Misfit Models	84
4.1.1 The Formation of the Social Constructionist Model: “Social Knowledge” to Disabilities	85
4.1.2 The Social Constructionist Model: Infertility and Social Expectations.....	88
4.1.3 The Misfit Model: The Cultural “Fit” of Infertility.....	93
4.2 The Stigmatization Category: The Enacted and Felt Models	96
4.2.1 The Formation of the Enacted and Felt Models: Epilepsy to Infertility	97
4.2.2 The Enacted Model: Overt Stigmatization of Infertility.....	100
4.2.3 The Felt Model: Infertility as a Hidden Disability.....	103
4.3 Models for the Study of Infertility and a Hermeneutic of Reproduction: A Conclusion	105
5 Applying a Hermeneutic of Reproduction to 1 Samuel 1.....	108
5.1 The Social Constructionist Model: Social Role Expectations and Stratified Reproduction.....	110
5.1.1 Social Role Expectations: Patrilineality, God’s Command, and Hannah’s Ingenuity	111
5.1.2 Stratified Reproduction: Power Dynamics Between Hannah, Peninnah, and Elkanah	114
5.2 The Misfit Model: Cultural-Literary Expectations and Subjugated Knowledge.....	118
5.2.1 Fit as a Cultural-Literary Critique: Misfit’s Connection with Disability Interpretations	118

5.2.2 Subjugated Knowledge: Cultural Discrimination and the Religious Model of Infertility	120
5.3 The Enacted Model: Explicit Stigmatization of Infertility and No Overt Discrimination.....	124
5.3.1 Explicit Stigmatization: Biblical Infertility in Disability and Feminist Biblical Exegesis	124
5.3.2 Enacted Model and 1 Samuel 1: No Overt Stigmatization of Hannah’s Infertility	126
5.4 The Felt Model: Spoiled Identity and Hidden Disability.....	129
5.4.1 Spoiled Identity: Familial and Personal Stigmatization of Hannah’s Infertility....	130
5.4.2 A Hidden Disability: Hannah’s Infertility as an “Invisible” Disability	132
5.5 Applying the Four Social-Scientific Models to Hannah’s Infertility: A Conclusion	134
6 A Biblical Hermeneutic of Reproduction and Infertility: A Conclusion	137
6.1 Key Observations of Selected Exegetical Works: Interpretations of 1 Samuel 1.....	138
6.2 The Benefits of the Hermeneutic of Reproduction: The Four Models and Hannah’s Infertility	141
6.3 A Hermeneutic of Reproduction and Biblical Infertility: Future Areas of Research	143
6.3.1 Female Infertility: Genesis 25; 29-30; Judges 13; 2 Samuel 6; and 2 Kings 4.....	144
6.3.2 Biblical Infertility and Surrogacy: Genesis 16.....	145
6.3.3 Male Infertility in the Bible: Genesis 20 and the Genesis Apocryphon (1QamGen)	146
6.3.4 LGBTQ Infertility in the Bible: Ruth 1-4.....	147
6.4 A Hermeneutic of Reproduction and Religious Studies: A Way Forward.....	148
Bibliography	150

DEDICATION

To Courtney, Neb, and Echo.

I hope that this study helps address the stereotype, the discrimination, and the stigmatization of involuntary childlessness. Courtney, Neb, Echo, this is for you.

1. Infertility and 1 Samuel 1: An Introduction

Infertility is a “global public health issue.”¹ It is a condition that influences the lives of roughly 10% of the world’s population. While infertility rates have remained stagnant since the 1990s, population growth has magnified the scope of this condition. Researchers with the World Health Organization or WHO note that “the absolute number of couples affected by infertility [has increased] from 42.0 million...in 1990 to 48.5 million...in 2010.”² The WHO also ranks infertility as the “5th highest serious global disability... among populations under the age of 60.”³ In short, infertility is not “a yuppie complaint of little concern to the rest of the purportedly overpopulated developing world.”⁴ Rather, infertility shapes a growing number of women, men, and couples worldwide. Understanding the conceptualization and stigmatization of childlessness is a topic worth pursuing in a variety of fields. It is important, not only in the medical sciences, but in the social sciences and even in biblical studies.

¹ World Health Organization, “Sexuality and Reproductive Health: Infertility is a Global Public Health Issue,” available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/infertility/perspective/en/> [accessed on March 5, 2019].

² Maya N. Mascarenhas, Seth R. Flaxman, Ties Boerma, Sheryl Vanderpoel, Gretchen A. Stevens, “National, Regional, and Global Trends in Infertility Prevalence Since 1990: A Systematic Analysis of 277 Health Surveys,” *PLOS Medicine* 9 (2012): 1.

³ “World Health Organization, “Sexuality and Reproductive Health: Infertility Definitions and Terminology,” available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/infertility/definitions/en/> [accessed on March 5, 2019]. Similarly, research on male infertility in the United States and Europe has shown that cases of impotency have increased by 52.4% in the last forty years. See, Hagai Levine, Niels Jørgensen, Anderson Martino-Andrade, Jamie Mendiola, Dan Weksler-Derri, Irina Mindlis, Rachel Pinotti, Shanna H. Swan, “Temporal Trends in Sperm Count: A Systematic Review and Meta-Regression Analysis,” *Human Reproduction Update* 23 (2017): 646-659. These statistics lead some new outlets to refer to an “infertility crisis.” See, e.g., Marcia C. Inhorn, “A Male Infertility Crisis is Coming. The Middle East Can Help,” *New York Times*, October 21, 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/21/opinion/sunday/male-infertility-middle-east.html>.

⁴ Frank von Balen and Marcia C. Inhorn, “Interpreting Infertility: A View from the Social Sciences,” in *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*, ed. Marcia C. Inhorn and Frank von Balen (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 7.

Religion plays an important role in the contemporary conceptualization of infertility. Social-scientific research shows that religious affiliation often influences women's self-evaluation and even leads to social discrimination. For example, in *Not Yet Pregnant: Infertile Couples in Contemporary America*, Arthur L. Greil investigates the "Judeo-Christian theodicy" that has the "tendency to blame the victim" for their infertility.⁵ He argues that this "culturally available [interpretation] hold[s] [infertile couples] personally responsible for the misfortune that has befallen them."⁶ Greil then addresses the outcome of this theodicy, interviewing numerous women who blame themselves or God for their childlessness.⁷ Other scholars also highlight the significance of religious affiliation. For instance, Susan Forsythe contends that "the pressure for women to live up to the social norm... based on religion" leads to the cultural discrimination of infertility.⁸ She notes: "[T]he social stigma attached to being childless is very damaging to women.... The stress is greatest when the women have great faith that [treatments] are going to work but then fail."⁹ In short, religion shapes the cultural description of infertility. It creates the opportunity for social and personal stigmatization.

Biblical scholarship should have much to say on the subject of infertility. After all, as Laurel W. Koepf-Taylor recognizes: "Infertility is a common theme throughout the Hebrew Bible. Many families prominent in biblical narratives struggle with varying degrees of childlessness."¹⁰ The Hebrew Bible is a robust source with multiple narratives that offer different accounts of the conceptualization and stigmatization of infertility. Given the number of

⁵ Arthur L. Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant: Infertile Couples in Contemporary America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 156.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 160-170.

⁸ Susan Forsythe, "Social Stigma and the Medicalization of Infertility," *Journal of the Manitoba Anthropology Students' Association* 28 (2009): 33.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Laurel Koepf-Taylor, *Give Me Children or I Shall Die: Children and Communal Survival in Biblical Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 33.

narratives that directly address childlessness in the Hebrew Bible,¹¹ few biblical scholars focus on the issue of infertility. Even when these exegetes highlight involuntary childlessness, or more often “barrenness,” they stress the economic and religious aspects of biblical infertility. Hence, scholars do not interpret the Bible beyond speculative or stereotypical notions on biblical childlessness. Their readings are not informed by social-scientific studies on involuntary childlessness as they have emerged in the last five decades. The conceptualization and stigmatization of infertility has been largely sidelined in lieu of economic and religious evaluations of biblical infertility narratives. Consequently, the only scholars openly dealing with biblical infertility texts work with hermeneutical perspectives informed by disability studies, gender studies, and feminist theory.¹²

This dissertation explores the need for an interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 that is grounded in social-scientific scholarship on infertility, as articulated by disability and feminist scholars during the last fifty years. The study analyzes interpretations on 1 Samuel 1 in the same fifty years that feminist-disability scholarship has emerged in the social sciences. Social-scientific scholarship on involuntary childlessness goes back further, but it is only informed by disability and feminist theory since the 1970s. Accordingly, the exegetical readings analyzed in this study

¹¹ A sample of narratives that deal with infertility in the Hebrew Bible include Sarai and Abram (Genesis 12, 16), Abimelech’s harem (Genesis 20), Rebekah (Genesis 25), Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29-30), Samson’s mother (Judges 13), Hannah (1 Samuel 1), Michal (2 Samuel 6), and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4).

¹² See, e.g., Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995); Joel S. Baden, “The Matriarchs as Models,” in *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Mary Callaway, *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979); J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, & Promise: The Subject of the Bible’s First Story* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993); Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003); Jo Ann Hackett, “1 and 2 Samuel” in *Women’s Bible Commentary: Twentieth-Anniversary Edition Revised and Updated*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012); Jeremy Schipper, *Disability & Isaiah’s Suffering Servant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978).

were produced in the same time frame during which feminist-disability scholarship began to be articulated in earnest. The study demonstrates the necessity for interpreting this biblical narrative with social-scientific research on infertility in mind. If such scholarship is not taken into account, biblical readings remain stuck in outdated terminology and uninformed assumptions about Hannah's involuntary childlessness. Social-scientific scholarship has produced four models on infertility that need to inform the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. The models are the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models. Employing the four models, the study shows that Hannah's infertility is stigmatized on familial and personal levels. It also demonstrates that involuntary childlessness must be understood within its cultural-literary context. The study challenges the economic and religious explanations for Hannah's infertility and counters biblical interpretations that view her involuntary childlessness as caused by economic distress, misfortune, or God. Most importantly, the application of the four models develops a reading centered on Hannah as an infertile woman.

1.1 Five Reasons for a Hermeneutic of Reproduction: The Present State of the Problem

The disjuncture between biblical scholarship on "barrenness" and social-scientific approaches to infertility requires a new interdisciplinary framework. This "hermeneutic of reproduction" addresses five specific issues facing Hebrew Bible exegesis on the topic of Hannah's infertility. The first issue relates to the dominance of the economic category in the analysis of Hannah's childlessness. Biblical scholarship has traditionally focused on the economic value of human reproduction in the biblical corpus. Accordingly, it emphasizes the economic imperative, that women must have children. In the process, these readings relegate the importance of Hannah's infertility, its conceptualization, and its stigmatization. More importantly, interpretations that advance the economic category reinforce pronatalist notions of

reproduction and normative motherhood. They read with the expectation of fertility and against infertile women. The hermeneutic of reproduction challenges economic readings that depict fertility as mandatory and motherhood as necessary. The study thus contests the economic category that relates Hannah's infertility with economic survival.

The second issue addresses the religious category of Hannah's infertility. Scholarship based on this category emphasizes religious discrimination of childlessness. The supposition that Hannah's infertility relates to a sin or personal failure leads to the denigration of biblical childlessness. Put another way, the inability to conceive is normatively read as a deficiency in women's theological status. Based on social-scientific scholarship on infertility, this study evaluates the exegetical tendency to consider childlessness a form of religious discrimination. It employs social-scientific models to critique the religious category that equates fecundity with femininity and fertility with blessing.

The third issue stresses the tendency for disability scholarship on 1 Samuel 1 to historicize Hannah's disability. Disability exegetes typically delineate between infertility as a contemporary medical condition and "barrenness" as a historical disability. Consequently, disability interpretations are limited to a historical analysis of Hannah's infertility. The emphasis on historical analysis in disability biblical scholarship curtails interpretations of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. It also discourages literary exegetes from using a disability framework. Thus, literary readings on biblical infertility do not employ disability theories. This study expands disability scholarship on 1 Samuel 1 beyond the historical-critical approach. It integrates disability social-scientific models on infertility into a hermeneutical framework that interprets Hannah's infertility within its cultural-literary context.

The fourth issue involves the proclivity of feminist biblical scholars to marginalize the perspective of infertility in 1 Samuel 1. Feminist exegetes challenge the economic and religious categories employed to describe Hannah's infertility. They also provide a strong critique of motherhood, a normative social position for women. However, feminist biblical scholars do not highlight the unique perspective of infertile women as it emerges in 1 Samuel 1. They also do not engage social-scientific models that underscore the conceptualization and stigmatization of childlessness in this narrative. The study investigates this tendency by incorporating the work of feminist social scientists who argue from the position of involuntary childlessness. The study thus maintains a feminist critique of pronatalist power structures while simultaneously siding with women who aspire to be mothers.

The fifth issue relates to the popularity of Christian self-help literature. These books reinforce the stereotype of blaming women for their infertility. Often they employ Hannah's story to explain that God controls women's fertility. For example, Jennifer Saake identifies Hannah as an important figure in her own infertility journey. She claims to have a "kinship with Hannah" that allows her to replace "[i]ntense anger and bitterness" with "a peace that comes only from God."¹³ She argues: "When I shift my focus from my human inabilities and infertility and seek God's strength to surmount fertility challenges according to His [*sic*] guidance, hope is rekindled."¹⁴ The point of Saake's personal reflection is to help readers move away from the theological claim that defines childlessness as "a sign of divine judgement and moral failure."¹⁵

¹³ Jennifer Saake, *Hannah's Hope: Seeking God's Heart in the Midst of Infertility, Miscarriage, and Adoption Loss* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), 15.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden, "Introduction," in *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 14.

Still, her book claims that God is directly responsible for women's childlessness. Again, Saake contends:

In seeking God's plan for her future, [Hannah] needed only to look to history for reassurance that He [*sic*] was in control. We, being of the "new order" under grace, have even more evidence that God does not abandon those He [*sic*] loves. And yet fertility challenges can easily leave us feeling deserted by God. Head knowledge doesn't always spawn heart-deep faith.¹⁶

In short, Christian self-help literature claims that faith and prayer are the solutions to childlessness. The hermeneutic of reproduction offers an alternative to this theological argument. It recognizes the inadequacy of Christian self-help literature, challenging the cultural-literary values that stigmatize Hannah's childlessness.

In sum, five issues outline the need for a hermeneutic of reproduction. The economic and religious categories move biblical interpretations away from the subject of Hannah's infertility. These readings instead highlight economic considerations or the theological implications of childlessness. Disability and feminist scholarship investigates Hannah's infertility. However, both hermeneutical frameworks focus on Hannah's disability or her gender. The readings do not center on the conceptualization and stigmatization of Hannah's infertility. Finally, Christian self-help literature reinforces the cultural-religious stigma of infertility that attributes childlessness to sin or faithlessness. It upholds a theological position that blames contemporary women for their infertility. Each of the five issues demonstrate the need for a hermeneutic of reproduction. The application of social-scientific models to the interpretation of biblical infertility explicates the cultural-literary conceptualization and stigmatization of Hannah's childlessness. This approach expands biblical scholarship on 1 Samuel 1. It also counters Christian self-help literature. In short, the hermeneutic of reproduction contributes to the scholarly analysis of the description and

¹⁶ Saake, *Hannah's Hope*, 93.

discrimination of Hannah’s infertility. It is an approach that reads the biblical narrative from the experience of infertility informed by social-scientific research.

1.2 From Barrenness to Infertility: Biblical and Social-Scientific Terms for Childlessness

There are numerous terms associated with the concept of infertility. Each of the terms relates to a different type of childlessness. This section proceeds in three parts. First, it analyzes the biblical terms that describe Hannah’s infertility. It also critiques the popularized translation of these terms as “barrenness.” Second, the section outlines the social-scientific terms that define infertility. It discusses the different words that scholars use to describe women’s childlessness. Third, the section establishes the terms employed in this study. It explains why these terms best describe Hannah’s childlessness.

1.2.1 Barrenness: A Critique of the Biblical Term

There are three biblical terms in the Hebrew Bible that focus on women’s infertility.¹⁷ The first term is עקרה. *Brown Driver Briggs* or BDB translates this term as “barren.”¹⁸ Likewise, David J. A. Clines translates עקרה as “barren, infertile.”¹⁹ 1 Samuel 1 does not use this term to describe Hannah’s infertility. However, Hannah’s song in 1 Sam. 2:5 uses the term to describe an infertile woman who conceives. Other examples of infertile women include Gen. 11:30, 25:21, 29:31, Exod. 23:26, Deut. 7:14, and Judg. 13:2. The term also appears in Isa. 54:1 to describe the infertility of Zion.

¹⁷ Other terms for barrenness include צִיָּה and עֲרֵבָה. These terms relate to “arid,” “barren lands,” or “desert-plains” rather than infertile women. For this reason, these terms are not addressed in this section. For examples of this usage, see, 1 Sam. 23:24, 2 Sam. 4:7, Job 24:5, Isa. 40:3, 41:19, 51:3, Jer. 2:6, 51:43, 52:8, Ezek. 19:13, and Hos. 2:5.

¹⁸ F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 785.

¹⁹ David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Vol. VI ט-פ (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 543. Clines also offers an alternate interpretation: “barren one, infertile one.” *Ibid.*

Another term, which appears in 1 Samuel 1, is רחם. Coupled with סגר, the phrase denotes women's infertility. Often, this phrase describes God's power over childbirth. The BDB translates the term: "(of God)... preventing childbirth."²⁰ Clines offers a more succinct translation, using the term "womb" and linking it to "close."²¹ Examples of God closing women's wombs appear in Gen. 20:18, and in 1 Sam. 1:5-6.²² The BDB also offers the translation of "barrenness" when this term is used in Prov. 30:16.²³ Finally, the term רחם relates to miscarriage and stillbirth, which are different types of infertility. Examples of this usage include Hos. 9:14, Num. 12:12, and Job 3:11.

The final term that describes infertility is שכל. This term does not appear in 1 Samuel 1. However, it does describe women who miscarry or have lost children. The BDB translates this term as "cause barrenness, or abortion."²⁴ Clines translates the term as "one who miscarries, one who is barren."²⁵ Examples of this term that relate to infertility include Exod. 23:26, 2 Kgs. 2:21, and Hos. 9:14. Notably this term is often used in conjunction with עקרה and רחם. The occurrences in Exod. 23:26 and Hos. 9:14 relate this term to other terms that describe infertility.

In biblical exegesis, the term "barrenness" typically carries negative connotations. For instance, the entry on this term in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states: "Barrenness [*sic*] was a woman's and her family's greatest misfortune.... [Whereas] fruitfulness was God's special blessing."²⁶ Likewise, *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* explains:

²⁰ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 933.

²¹ David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Vol. VII ז-ר (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 470.

²² Examples of God opening wombs include Gen. 29:31 and 30:22.

²³ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 933.

²⁴ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 1013.

²⁵ David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Vol. VIII ט-ש (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 353.

²⁶ T. Rees, "Barren," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1979), 432-433.

“Barrenness [*sic*] was believed to be a curse from God.... Barrenness [*sic*] is removed by the mercy of God, often through the use of prayer.”²⁷ The *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* argues: “For a woman to be barren [*sic*] was the ultimate in sorrow and shame.... She was looked upon as one whom God had smitten. Regardless of her position or other blessings, she was in sorrow until a child should be born.”²⁸ The *New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* offers a slightly more objective definition: “Barrenness [*sic*] describes a woman who is physically unable to bear children.”²⁹ However, it then goes on to argue that “barrenness [*sic*]—like famine, drought, and disease—was typically viewed as a sign of divine disapproval.”³⁰ Finally, the *Encyclopedia Judaica* succinctly states that “barrenness [*sic*] was a curse and a punishment.”³¹ In all of these dictionaries and encyclopedias, the term “barrenness” relates to women’s culpability and religious punishment. The entries identify childlessness as a problem either caused by women or by God because of their disobedience.³²

The translation “barren” also belies exegetical ignorance on the contemporary stigmatization of infertility. Often biblical scholars use the term innocently, employing it in an effort to historicize the experience of childlessness. “Barrenness,” in this sense, is a conscious effort “to provide a corrective to... the medical model [that] approaches disability as an individual medical or healthcare issue that must be corrected or cured through treatment by

²⁷ O. J. Baab, “Barrenness,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 4, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, Thomas Samuel Kepler, John Knox, Herbert Gordon May, and Samuel Terrien (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1962), 359.

²⁸ Terrelle B. Crum, “Barren,” in *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, and John Rea (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), 205.

²⁹ Timothy Willis, “Barren, Barrenness,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible A-C*, Vol. 1, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, Samuel E. Balentine, Brian K. Blount, Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan, Joel B. Green, Eileen Schuller, Pheme Perkins, Paul Franklyn, and Marianne Blickenstaff (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 400.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Alexander Carlebach and Judith Baskin, “Barrenness and Fertility,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica 2nd edition*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit, MI: Macmillan, 2007), 174.

³² Notably the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* and the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* do not reference either “barrenness” or “infertility.”

healthcare professionals.”³³ It is an alternative to the clinical term “infertility.” The translation “barrenness” recognizes that the experience of childlessness in biblical literature does not fall under this designation. It is anachronistic. Even so, the term “barrenness” is not etymologically related to the Hebrew terms עקרה, רחם, and שכל. It comes from the twelfth-century French word “baraigne.”³⁴ Thus, the term “barren” is not more historically accurate than the term “infertile.” In fact, Clines establishes that both translations equally describe the concept of biblical infertility. More importantly, “barrenness” conveys a negative evaluation of childlessness today. According to *The Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, “barren” refers not only to the inability to produce offspring, but also something that “impl[ies] a state of destitution, or of defenselessness.... Suggests aridity or impoverishment or sterility.”³⁵ Likewise, the *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines the term variously as “infertile... bleak and lifeless; empty of meaning and value.”³⁶ Thus, the biblical translation “barrenness” normalizes the experience of fertility, devalues women’s childlessness, and vindicates the stigmatization of infertile women.

1.2.2 Infertility, Involuntary Childlessness, and Child-free: Social-Scientific Terms

Social-scientific scholars employ numerous terms to delineate between different types of infertility. One of the earliest, and most popular, terms is “infertility.” Superficially, this term refers to a medical diagnosis. It is “a disease of the reproductive system defined by the failure to

³³ Nyasha Junior and Jeremy Schipper, “Disability Studies and the Bible,” in *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 22.

³⁴ See, e.g., Walter W. Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Third Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 52; Walter W. Skeat, *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology: The Pioneering Work on the Roots and Origins of the Language* (Kettering: Wordsworth Editions, 1993), 30. Comparatively, infertility draws from the Latin *infertilitatem* meaning “not fertile.” See, Online Etymology Dictionary, “infertile,” available at: https://www.etymonline.com/word/infertility#etymonline_v_34830 [accessed on March 6, 2019].

³⁵ *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary: Eleventh Edition*, s.v. “Barren” (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2004), 98.

³⁶ *Oxford Dictionary of English: Third Edition*, s.v. “Barren,” ed. Angus Stevenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 134.

achieve a clinical pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse.”³⁷ Social-scientific researchers largely reject the clinical definition of infertility. They contend that the medical description of childlessness fails primarily because it identifies childbirth as the only resolution. They suggest that “other possibilities exist besides pursuing a ‘cure’... including self-definition as voluntarily childfree, adoption, fosterage, or changing partners.”³⁸ Still, rather than reject the term, social-scientific scholars reclaim its usage. They conceptualize infertility as a social disability, and they use the term as an identifier for the cultural and structural forces that influence the stigmatization of childlessness. Put another way, social-scientific scholars adopt the term infertility to refer to the condition of childlessness. However, they reject the clinical definition and argue that infertility refers to the cultural structures that describe and discriminate against involuntary childlessness.

Other terms move away from the clinical definition of infertility. One example is “involuntary childlessness.” This phrase emphasizes the social aspect of infertility. As Christian J. Wilson explains, involuntary childlessness “recognizes the condition as a social one, not intrinsically biological or medical...[and] is thought to be less stigma laden.”³⁹ The opposite of the second term is “child-free” or “voluntary childlessness.” Both terms identify individuals who choose to not have children. As Belle Boggs suggests, these terms are “a replacement for the narrative of the pitiable outsider.”⁴⁰ They offer an alternative to the pronatalist expectation that women must become mothers. Consequently, the terms child-free and voluntary childlessness do

³⁷ F. Zegers-Hochschild, G. D. Adamson, J. de Mouzon, O. Ishihara, R. Mansour, K. Nygren, E. Sullivan, and S. Vanderpoel, “International Committee for Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technology (ICMART) and the World Health Organization (WHO) revised glossary of ART terminology, 2009” *Fertility and Sterility* 92 (2009): 1522.

³⁸ Arthur L. Greil, Julia McQuillan, and Kathleen Slauson-Blevins, “The Social Construction of Infertility,” *Sociology Compass* 5/8 (2011), 737.

³⁹ Kristin J. Wilson, *Not Trying: Infertility, Childlessness, and Ambivalence* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014), 11-12.

⁴⁰ Belle Boggs, *The Art of Waiting: On Fertility, Medicine, and Motherhood* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2016), 31.

not describe people who deal with infertility. Rather, they represent the choice many women (and men) make to not reproduce. For sure, contemporary social scientists never employ the term “barrenness.”

1.2.3 Infertility and Involuntary Childlessness: Issues of Terminology

This dissertation follows the definition of infertility laid out by social-scientific scholars. It uses the terms “infertility” and “infertile” to refer to the conceptualization and stigmatization of Hannah’s childlessness. The following chapters refrain from using the term “barren” except in quotations. It argues that this outdated vocabulary does not contribute to the description of infertility. Instead, it denounces childlessness as a punishment by God. The chapters also do not refer to “child-free” or “voluntary childlessness” since these terms do not apply to Hannah’s infertility. Hannah wants to have a child and thus actively pursues methods to conceive. Finally, the chapters uses the terms “involuntary childlessness” and “childlessness” to describe Hannah’s infertility. These two terms avoid the negative connotations associated with “barrenness” but still convey the discrimination of infertility in this biblical story. In short, this study refers to Hannah as an infertile, involuntary childless, or childless woman.

1.3 The Ideological-Critical Evaluation of Infertility: Issues of Method

Biblical studies increasingly values the integration of different perspectives in the evaluation of narratives in the Hebrew Bible. As Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner recognize, there is “a growing movement in the field toward explicitly ideological and reader-oriented perspectives.”⁴¹ As a method of biblical exegesis, ideological criticism investigates the attitudes or assumptions in biblical texts that shape human relationships and influence power

⁴¹ Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner, “Preface,” in *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013), xii.

relations. It is “centrally concerned with laying bare the ideological dimensions of a text.”⁴² The method encompasses scholarship from feminist, liberationist, womanist, queer, postcolonial, and disability studies.⁴³ The versatility of ideological criticism makes it an effective method for studying biblical infertility. This section offers a brief overview of ideological criticism. It has three major parts. The first part discusses the definition of “ideology.” The second part shows that this method underscores power relations. The third part explains how this method is applied to 1 Samuel 1.

First, it is difficult to precisely define ideological criticism.⁴⁴ Still, on its most basic level, this method “has roots in Marxist literary theory.”⁴⁵ It highlights the importance of ideology in the power dynamics between oppressors and the oppressed. As a literary theory, ideological criticism focuses on cultural-literary contexts by emphasizing the role ideology plays in the construction, proliferation, and dissemination of narratives. Or as Fredric Jameson states, ideological criticism examines “how a text which is maimed and deformed and bears the nasty

⁴² Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism: Third Edition Revised and Expanded* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 84.

⁴³ See, e.g., Itumeleng Mosala, “The implications of the Text of Esther for African Women’s Struggle for Liberation in South Africa,” *Semeia* 59 (1992): 129-137; Danna Nolan Fewell, “Reading the Bible Ideologically: Feminist Criticism,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999); Fernando F. Segovia, “Reading the Bible Ideologically: Socioeconomic Criticism,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999); Rebecca Raphael, *Biblical Corpora: Representations of Disability in Hebrew Biblical Literature* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2008); Deryn Guest, “From Gender Reversal to Genderfuck: Reading Jael through a Lesbian Lens,” in *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Teresa J. Hornsby and Ken Stone (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011); R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Wilda C. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017).

⁴⁴ As The Bible and Culture Collective argues: “The most complex problem in this chapter is also the most basic: defining ideology and ideological criticism.” See, The Bible and Culture Collective, “Ideological Criticism,” in *The Postmodern Bible*, ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli, Stephen D. Moore, Gary A. Phillips, and Regina M. Schwartz (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995), 272. Likewise, as Tina Phippen states: “‘Ideology’ is a slippery term, at once difficult to define and politically charged.” See, Tina Phippen, “Biblical Women as Ideological Constructs Toward Justice: Ideological Criticism as a Feminist/Womanist Method,” in *Feminist Interpretations of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect*, Vol. III: Methods, ed. Susanne Scholz (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2016), 261.

⁴⁵ Phippen, “Biblical Women as Ideological Constructs Toward Justice,” 263.

marks and traces of its own class and gender and racial...stances—how such a text can be both ideological and utopian.”⁴⁶ In short, ideological criticism investigates how biblical narratives appeal to their audience even as they reinforce gender, racial, social, and political hierarchies. This method highlights the relationship between ideology and utopianism. It critiques the cultural-literary contexts of biblical narratives by exposing underlying ideological convictions, stereotypes, and suppositions.

Second, ideological criticism emphasizes the importance of investigating “power relations.”⁴⁷ Scholars employing this method critique power structures that oppress, marginalize, or stigmatize individuals. Ideological criticism also challenges readers to “become aware of their [own] ethical assumptions and belief systems.”⁴⁸ It examines how ideology shapes narratives and their interpretation. In short, the method underscores that “the ideological character of a society is tied to and reflected in... literary texts.”⁴⁹ Accordingly, the ideological analysis of biblical literature operates on multiple levels. Christopher Rowland notes, the interpretation of biblical ideology “sometimes... manifests the voice of the oppressor and his [*sic*] ideology.”⁵⁰ Other times it “articulates [the] subversive memory.”⁵¹ Put another way, the perspective of the oppressed and oppressor are both present in biblical narratives. The role of the interpreter is to identify the boundaries between these perspectives and their own. Thus, the method highlights power dynamics in the interpretation of biblical ideology. It “makes transparent the uses and abuses of the Bible” based on the ideology present in biblical texts.⁵²

⁴⁶ Fredric Jameson, “A Conversation with Fredric Jameson,” *Semeia* 59 (1992): 228.

⁴⁷ Pippin, “Biblical Women as Ideological Constructs Toward Justice,” 269.

⁴⁸ Susanne Scholz, *The Bible as Political Artifact: On the Feminist Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), xxi.

⁴⁹ The Bible and Culture Collective, “Ideological Criticism,” 274.

⁵⁰ Christopher Rowland, “Social, Political, and Ideological Criticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 659.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Pippin, “Biblical Women as Ideological Constructs Toward Justice,” 277.

Third, the versatility of ideological criticism makes it an effective method for studying biblical infertility. This study investigates the ideological presentation of Hannah's childlessness. It examines the cultural-literary context of 1 Samuel 1, addressing how the narrative conceptualizes and stigmatizes Hannah's infertility. It also recognizes that Hannah's perspective is central to the interpretation of the text. Thus, the ideological-critical interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 focuses on the struggle between Hannah's experience and the conceptualization of infertility. Put another way, 1 Samuel 1 speaks to the perspective of Hannah's childlessness even as it legitimizes the discrimination of her infertility. The analysis of the narrative must therefore delineate between two perspectives. It investigates the ideological portrayal or conceptualization of infertility. It also highlights the stigmatization of Hannah's childlessness.

1.4 Social-Scientific Models for the Study of Infertility: A Brief Overview

As Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen note, ideological criticism is often closely related to social-scientific studies which "reconstructs the socioeconomic conditions in biblical times."⁵³ This study applies social-scientific models to the interpretation of Hannah's infertility. It employs four different models to outline the conceptualization and stigmatization of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. The application of the models critiques the cultural-literary power structures that legitimize Hannah's marginalization. It also stresses Hannah's experience, noting that childlessness shapes Hannah's actions in the story.

The hermeneutic of reproduction includes four models. The first two models—the social constructionist and misfit models—inform the cultural-literary evaluation of Hannah's infertility in 1 Samuel 1. The application of the social constructionist model investigates Hannah's social role expectations in 1 Samuel 1. It exposes the cultural-literary context as pressuring women to

⁵³ Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 84.

reproduce. The application of the social constructionist model also highlights the importance of stratified reproduction. This characteristic describes the different social positions women hold in the same cultural-literary context based on their fecundity. The application of the misfit model contrasts social norms with Hannah's experience. It focuses on the "misfit" between society and Hannah's infertility. The application of the misfit model also emphasizes Hannah's subjugated knowledge. This characteristic investigates the discrimination of Hannah's infertility by centering the interpretation of the narrative on Hannah's marginalized perspective.

The other two models—the enacted and felt models—highlight the different ways Hannah is stigmatized in the biblical text. The application of the enacted model centers on explicit discrimination, including community expulsion, polygamy, and divorce. This model is popular among biblical scholars, although it is insufficient to describe the stigmatization of Hannah's infertility. The application of the felt model underscores the hidden or invisible stigmatization of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. It emphasizes role failure, leading to familial and personal stigmatization. It also stresses that Hannah hides her infertility from Eli. She maintains an anonymous reproductive identity to avoid overt stigmatization.

In sum, the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models help describe the conceptualization and stigmatization of Hannah's infertility in 1 Samuel 1. These models function in tandem with the method of ideological criticism. By applying the four models to 1 Samuel 1, the study argues that Hannah's infertility is the central issue. It also highlights the different ways in which the narrative describes Hannah's infertility as a social construct or a misfit. Further, it differentiates between the explicit and implicit stigmatization of infertility in the story. Together, the four models complexify the interpretation of Hannah's childlessness in 1 Samuel 1. Thus, they expand the scope of biblical scholarship on the subject of infertility.

1.5 Towards a Hermeneutic of Reproduction: Chapter Outlines

This study consists of an introductory chapter, four chapters on the hermeneutic of reproduction, and a conclusion. The first chapter is the introduction. It outlines the need for a hermeneutic of reproduction in the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. In today's society, attitudes about infertility are shaped by religious convictions. They contribute to the social and personal stigmatization of infertility. It is thus necessary to apply social-scientific models to the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. The models challenge the exegetical habits that perpetuate the stereotype of infertility. The hermeneutic of reproduction critiques biblical interpretations of 1 Samuel 1 that reduce infertility to an economic or theological concern, historicize Hannah's infertility as a disability, and do not engage social-scientific studies. The introductory chapter also surveys the terminology for infertility ranging from "barrenness" to "involuntary childlessness." It becomes clear that the use of the term "barren" is problematic and that the terms "infertility" and "involuntary childlessness" best describe Hannah's character in 1 Samuel 1. The chapter outline concludes the introduction.

The second chapter examines English-language scholarship on 1 Samuel 1 from 1971 to the present. It investigates both historical-critical and literary interpretations. The chapter proposes that the commentaries fall under two broad categories—the economic and religious categories. It shows that the readings sideline Hannah's perspective, conceptualization, and stigmatization. The exegetical works instead emphasize the economic issues surrounding biblical childlessness, or they stress theological explanations as the cause for Hannah's infertility. Some interpretations of Hannah's childlessness go even further, arguing that her infertility is symbolic for the suffering of the Israelite people. Consequently, scholarly literature on 1 Samuel 1 is

limited to categorizing Hannah's infertility as an economic or religious issue. It does not engage social-scientific models that redefine how to think about infertility.

The third chapter investigates disability and feminist readings of 1 Samuel 1. Unlike the commentaries in Chapter 2, disability and feminist interpretations define childlessness as a problem grounded in embodiment and gender. Disability scholars offer a historical analysis of Hannah's social marginalization. Feminist scholars challenge the economic and religious categories. Some exegetes laud Hannah's fecundity as a unique female contribution to Israelite society, whereas others critique motherhood and present Hannah as complicit to patriarchal ideology. Both approaches do not engage social-scientific models, although they center on Hannah, her marginalization, and her stigmatization based on her gender and disabled status.

The fourth chapter surveys four social-scientific models on infertility. They are the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models. The chapter explains that the four models are essential to the interpretation of Hannah's childlessness. The social-constructionist model shows that infertility is a social construct informed by cultural expectations. It highlights the discrimination of childlessness based on social expectations of motherhood. The misfit model explains that infertility is simultaneously an experience and a culturally-enforced disability. It stresses the dissonance between the perspective of involuntary childlessness and the cultural expectation of women having children. The enacted model underscores the explicit stigmatization of childlessness. It identifies the social and cultural power structures that overtly discriminate against infertile women. The felt model highlights the hidden stigma of infertility. It emphasizes women's spoiled identities and the invisibility of the discrimination against infertility.

The fifth chapter applies the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models to the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. It demonstrates that the four models complexify the understanding of Hannah's childlessness. The application of the social constructionist model centers on Hannah's social role expectations. It identifies the cultural-literary norms that shape the depiction of Hannah's infertility. It also underscores the stratification between Hannah and Peninnah based on their reproductive statuses. The application of the misfit model attends to the discrepancy between the cultural expectations of Hannah being a mother and her infertility. Disability and feminist scholars apply the enacted model to biblical infertility. This includes their analyses of 1 Samuel 1. However, this chapter explains that the enacted model alone does not explain the stigmatization of Hannah's infertility. It requires the inclusion of the felt model. The application of the felt model demonstrates how to understand the stigma of Hannah's childlessness. It underscores the importance of Hannah's spoiled identity that leads to familial and personal stigmatization. Further, it explains why she hides her childlessness from Eli the priest.

The conclusion discusses the key observations taken from the exegetical interpretations of 1 Samuel 1 in the last five decades. It shows that biblical scholars continue to rely on the economic and religious categories in their analyses of Hannah's infertility. The chapter also explains the benefits of a hermeneutic of reproduction. It contends that the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models deepen the understanding of Hannah's infertility. The conclusion also suggests future areas of research on the topic of biblical infertility. It observes that the four social-scientific models address other forms of infertility, involuntary childlessness, and neonatal child-loss in the Hebrew Bible.

In sum, this study offers an ideological-critical interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 that is grounded in social-scientific scholarship on infertility. It employs the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models to enhance the understanding of Hannah’s infertility. It challenges the economic and religious categories that biblical scholars employ in their interpretations. It also contributes to disability and feminist scholarship. Finally, the study counters Christian self-help literature that stigmatizes infertility today. As Boggs contends: “Prejudices persist—a woman without a child is less feminine, less nurturing. She is defined by what she does not have, and she confronts, again and again, a culture that reinforces the wrongness of her circumstances.”⁵⁴ This study challenges this prejudice of childlessness and promotes an interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 that recognizes the different experiences of infertility.

⁵⁴ Boggs, *The Art of Waiting*, 41.

2. Historical-Critical and Literary Interpretations of “Barrenness” in 1 Samuel 1

This chapter critiques the rhetoric of “barrenness” appearing in English-language scholarly literature on 1 Samuel 1, published from 1971 to 2013.¹ These readings demonstrate that two main categories prevail in the exegetical writings on Hannah’s involuntary childlessness. The first category defines reproductive practices as an economic advantage in ancient Israel. The second category expresses the religious conviction that infertility is a form of divine displeasure.² Biblical exegetes pair both categories with two methods: historical criticism and literary criticism. Historical-critical scholars stress either economic or religious categories in their discussions on Hannah’s infertility. Similarly, literary theorists employ either economic or religious categories in their analyses of Hannah’s struggle with childlessness.

¹ The readings analyzed in this chapter demonstrate the popularity of the economic and religious categorization of infertility in English-language commentary literature on 1 Samuel 1. I limit the number of commentaries examined in each section to three to illustrate propensity for both historical-critical and literary biblical scholars to utilize these categories. The most recent commentary directly addressed in this chapter was published in 2013. More recent commentaries have been written on 1 Samuel 1, but do not significantly deviate from either the religious or economic category of infertility. These commentaries will be addressed in subsequent chapters as well as in footnotes in Chapter 1. See, e.g., Joel S. Baden, “The Matriarchs as Models,” in *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Joel S. Baden, “Be Fruitful and Multiply: The Dangers of Divine Blessing,” *Communitas: Journal of Education Beyond the Walls* 14 (2018): 4-8; Stephen B. Chapman, *1 Samuel as Christian Scripture: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016); Janice P. De-Whyte, *Wom(b)an: A Cultural-Narrative Reading of the Hebrew Bible Barrenness Narratives* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2018); Hugh S. Pyper, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *The Historical Writings: Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition*, ed. Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr., and Matthew J. M. Coomber (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2016); Roland F. Youngblood, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017).

² The religious category is based on a term popularized by disability biblical scholars. As Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden note: “The basic premise is that disability or disease is divine judgement from God... This is what, in critical disability theory, has come to be known as the religious model... the notion that disability is divine punishment.” See, Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden, “Introduction,” in *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 15.

The twelve readings analyzed in this chapter are chosen for five reasons. First, the selected works illustrate the exegetical-scholarly proclivity to rely on economic and religious categories in discussions on Hannah's infertility. Second, the commentaries demonstrate the prevalence of economic and religious categories in the discourse on Hannah's involuntary childlessness. Third, the analysis includes works published in the last five decades, beginning in 1971 and concluding in 2016. The publication period of slightly more than fifty years establishes the durability of economic and religious categories as they pertain to the rhetoric on Hannah's infertility. Fourth, the time gap between these readings shows that biblical scholars continuously rely on these two categories when they address Hannah's infertility. Finally, only interpretations that explicitly engage the topic of infertility in 1 Samuel 1 are included in this chapter. Readings that do not offer a detailed explanation for Hannah's childlessness are beyond the scope of this study.³

Four sections structure the chapter. The first section analyzes historical-critical commentaries that emphasize the economic category of infertility. The second section examines historical-critical readings based on the religious category. The third section investigates literary commentaries that use the economic category. The fourth section considers literary works that stress the religious category of Hannah's childlessness. The conclusion, summarizing the four sections, critiques these exegetical categories and proposes that these readings do not center on the stigmatization of Hannah's involuntary childlessness.

³ See, e.g., Derek Cooper and Martin J. Lohrmann, eds., *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament V 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016); Serge Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle: 1 Samuel 1-8 in Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004); John Mauchline, *1 and 2 Samuel* (London: Oliphants, 1971); James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co, 2000); David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans, 2007).

2.1 Historical-Critical Interpretations Based on the Economic Category

The first group of historical-critical exegetes advance an economic reading of Hannah's infertility. Scholars, relying on this approach, theorize that infertile women are economically stigmatized due to their inability to reproduce. These interpreters underscore the economic importance of children and explain that offspring assist their families as physical laborers and provide parents with economic security in old age. The following analysis examines the interpretations by Peter R. Ackroyd, James D. Newsome, and Gnana Robinson, published from 1971 to 1993 and presented in chronological order.⁴

2.1.1 Infertility as a Problem to the Patrilineal System: The Interpretation of Peter R. Ackroyd

Peter R. Ackroyd's commentary on 1 Samuel 1 uses the economic category of infertility to posit that Hannah's childlessness is a problem requiring the birth of a male heir. He historicizes the practice of polygamy, contending that Hannah, Elkanah, and Peninnah engage in a legitimate reproductive strategy. Ackroyd uses his historicized interpretation to show that Elkanah's family is religiously devout. He then favorably contrasts Elkanah with Eli and his sons.

Ackroyd's interpretation proceeds in two parts. In the first part, Ackroyd underscores the economic importance of children to demonstrate that Elkanah's bigamous marriage to Peninnah is a socially acceptable reproductive strategy in ancient Israel. He thus analyzes the practice of polygamy as a reproductive method that aims to alleviate Hannah's involuntary childlessness. Ackroyd presumes that readers are uncomfortable with the bigamous marriage described in 1 Samuel 1. He establishes the validity of this reproductive strategy given the family's continued

⁴ Peter R. Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, Cambridge Bible Commentary 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); James D. Newsome, *1 Samuel 2 Samuel: Knox Preaching Guides* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1983); Gnana Robinson, *1 & 2 Samuel: Let Us Be Like the Nations*, International Theological Commentary 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans, 1993).

infertility. Ackroyd contends that offspring produced through polygamous marriage provide a solution to the economic issue of childlessness. He states:

Polygamy was not uncommon in Old Testament times. It served two very useful purposes. It gave the greater assurance that a man would have a son to keep his name alive.... It also ensured protection for the women members of the community; as daughters they came under the protection of father or perhaps another male relative.⁵

Ackroyd highlights the economic factors that permit Elkanah to marry Peninnah. He provides two reasons for polygamous marriage in cases of infertility. First, Ackroyd states that the birth of a son keeps Elkanah's "name alive." This explanation suggests that offspring provided an economic advantage to Elkanah's family. The child propagates the family line and supplies an heir to Elkanah's property. Second, Ackroyd believes that polygamy protected the women in Elkanah's family, as Hannah would depend on a male relative in old age. Ackroyd notes that this reproductive strategy is like "the frequent injunction to protect the widow who has lost her main support in society."⁶ He thus argues that polygamy serves two distinct purposes. Children produced through bigamous marriage preserve patrilineal continuity and offer economic protection to women. Yet, Ackroyd's reading does not focus directly on Hannah's infertility. Instead, his interpretation asserts the normalcy of polygamy to vindicate the preservation of patrilineal lineage.

Ackroyd also uses his interpretation of polygamy to justify Elkanah's marriage to Peninnah. More importantly, his description of bigamy allows Ackroyd to engage in a lengthy critique of Eli and his sons. By emphasizing that Hannah, Elkanah, and Peninnah act within

⁵ Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, 19. Like Ackroyd, Youngblood's commentary also focuses on the issue of polygamy. Youngblood maintains that polygamy is problematic but not necessarily condemned in biblical texts. He legitimizes the polygamous marriage in 1 Samuel 1 by referring to the "tragedy" of Hannah's infertility. Essentially, he stresses that "barrenness [*sic*] in ancient times was the ultimate tragedy for a married woman, since her husband's hopes and dreams depend on her providing him with a son to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate." In this sense, Youngblood also incorporates the economic categorization of infertility into his analysis. See, Youngblood, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 45.

⁶ Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, 19.

social norms, Ackroyd is able to compare this faithful family with their priestly counterpart. He explains:

The first three chapters of the book... are interwoven with judgement on the family of Eli.... When the story concentrates on Samuel there are reminders of the background of the failure of Eli's sons, and when we turn to the family of Eli, a contrast is drawn with Samuel's growth in wisdom and piety.⁷

Ackroyd focuses on the introduction of Eli and his sons in verse 3, claiming that this brief depiction foreshadows “the story which follows in chapter 2 and 4 in which this priestly family comes under divine judgement.”⁸ Ackroyd then contrasts the presentation of Elkanah's family in chapter 1 with the corruption of Eli's family in these subsequent chapters. Ackroyd thus establishes a binary between the faithful family and the impious priests. He legitimizes Hannah's, Elkanah's, and Peninnah's polygamous marriage to favorably contrast their piety with the sins of Eli's sons. Still, Ackroyd does not recognize Hannah's inability to conceive as a central feature of chapter 1.⁹ Rather, her infertility turns into an obstacle to Ackroyd's interpretation that regards this biblical family as the best example of faithfulness among the Israelite people. Since Hannah's childlessness leads to a dubious marriage practice, Ackroyd forwards his argument by appealing to the customs of ancient Israel.

In sum, Ackroyd's rhetoric on Hannah's infertility normalizes the system of polygamous marriage. His analysis includes an examination of the economic issues linked to biblical infertility. The economic factors in this commentary exhibit how Elkanah, Hannah, and Peninnah act within the social institutions of the ancient Near East. Ackroyd indicates that the only viable solution to Hannah's infertility is polygamous marriage or childbirth. He reduces Hannah's role to her ability to reproduce. She is valued in Israelite society but only as a “wife” or “mother.”

⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁹ For example, Ackroyd titles his first section “the birth and call of Samuel.” Ibid., 18.

Ackroyd therefore does not challenge the patrilineal system that stigmatizes Hannah's infertility. He also does not address the danger she faces for not having a child of her own. Instead the social custom of polygamous marriage and requisite fertility supports Ackroyd's larger argument that Samuel's birth and the distinction between Samuel and Eli's sons are central features of 1 Samuel 1. In Ackroyd's commentary, Samuel's birth guarantees Hannah's economic survival and provides an heir for the patrilineal system of ancient Israel even as it sidelines Hannah's character.

2.1.2 Infertility as a Symbol for Israel's Suffering: The Interpretation of James D. Newsome

Similar to Ackroyd's reading, James D. Newsome includes the economic category in his interpretation. He uses this category in conjunction with the Deuteronomistic framework of retributive justice. Newsome suggests that Hannah's struggle with infertility symbolizes a broken covenantal relationship. Her childlessness is akin to the Israelite separation from God. He also asserts that Hannah's infertility epitomizes the suffering of the Israelite community. Both her conception and the Israelite reunification must be resolved through retributive justice. To support his hypothesis, Newsome proposes that Hannah's infertility is a matter of economic necessity.

Newsome's commentary has two main points. He first stresses that Hannah's childlessness creates a paradox in the Deuteronomistic system of retributive justice. According to this framework, Hannah's faith should result in conception. Her childlessness, therefore, reveals a discrepancy between piety and retributive justice. Newsome claims that the economic issue of infertility best illustrates this paradox. He does not allude to any "sin" that justifies Hannah's infertility. Instead, Newsome theorizes that her childlessness arouses "deep sympathy among many ancient Hebrews."¹⁰ Accordingly, Hannah's infertility is not the result of God's anger but

¹⁰ Newsome, *1 Samuel 2 Samuel*, 16.

economic misfortune. Her inability to conceive is a personal disadvantage that disrupts the continuation of the family line. So, fertility signifies economic survival. As Newsome states: “In biblical times one’s children were often the only form of Social Security available for old age.”¹¹ The implications of this argument are vital to his hypothesis. If God’s anger does not cause Hannah’s infertility, making it the result of economic misfortune, her continued childlessness despite her faith creates a paradox in the Deuteronomistic system of retributive justice.

Next, Newsome addresses this paradox by turning to the importance of prayer. He shifts focus from Hannah’s childlessness as an economic disadvantage to her relationship with God. Newsome claims that Hannah’s faithfulness alleviates her involuntary childlessness. He also extends this argument to the entire Israelite community. He asserts that behind the retributive framework “there is a bedrock of divine benevolence toward Israel which operates in good times and in bad.”¹² In 1 Samuel 1, he investigates how Hannah’s hope for a child resonates with the “special relationship which God has initiated with his [*sic*] people.”¹³ Put another way, Hannah’s infertility symbolizes the suffering of Israel. Accordingly, Hannah’s conception reveals the benevolence God shows to the faithful. In short, Hannah’s faith represents Israel’s desire for a renewed relationship with God, which is affirmed through the birth of Samuel.

In sum, Newsome focuses on the economic issue of Hannah’s childlessness. He stresses her piety in God. His interpretation also presents the economic category as a proxy for Israel’s broken relationship with God. Consequently, Newsome does not critique the economic category of Hannah’s infertility. He does not challenge the claim that Hannah must have a child to alleviate the stigma of her involuntary childlessness. Rather, he defends the Deuteronomistic

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 9.

¹³ Ibid., 12.

framework of retributive justice and God's benevolence. He hypothesizes that an infertile Hannah would find "some other outlet for her conviction concerning the basic goodness of God. If a child had continued to be denied to her, she would likely have redoubled her devotion to her husband."¹⁴ This statement illustrates Newsome's emphasis on faith. He maintains that Hannah's piety supersedes her economic distress.

2.1.3 Infertility and Economic Exploitation in India: The Interpretation of Gnana Robinson

Gnana Robinson's commentary also features the economic category in his description of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. He stresses that economic pressure leads to the stigmatization of Hannah's infertility. Further, he offers a contextual reading that links Hannah's childlessness to the social context of women in contemporary India. This comparison allows Robinson to comment on the cultural pressure to reproduce. He strongly criticizes husbands for not supporting their spouses. Finally, he presents faith as the solution to Hannah's childlessness. He uses the religious category to argue that God always sides with the poor and needy.¹⁵

Robinson develops his argument in three steps. First, he identifies the economic stigma of Hannah's childlessness, underscoring the importance of male heirs in ancient Israel. As he explains: "Polygamy was the consequence of this discriminative treatment of women, and Hannah was one of its victims.... [T]he fact that she had not produced any children, especially male children, became another social stigma upon her."¹⁶ He also stresses that Hannah "suffers utter humiliation under [the] double discrimination" of her gender and infertile status.¹⁷

Robinson thus clearly recognizes the stigma of infertility and sides with Hannah in her efforts to

¹⁴ Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁵ He specifically refers to God as the "God of the poor and the needy." See, Robinson, *1 & 2 Samuel: Let Us Be Like the Nations*, 18.

¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁷ Ibid.

conceive. More importantly, Robinson suggests that Hannah's marginal status is "no fault of her own."¹⁸ He critiques the "male chauvinistic society" that discriminates against Hannah because of her infertility.¹⁹

Second, Robinson ties this category to the economic exploitation of women in contemporary India. He notes that Elkanah is unable "to give full expression of his love to his wife" because "of the social stigma of barrenness [*sic*]."²⁰ Then, he compares Elkanah's abuse with newly married Indian couples, reporting that young "husbands, in spite of their love for their beautiful young wives, succumb to pressure... to extract more money from their parents."²¹ Robinson thus indicates that husbands in both contexts love their wives. However, cultural norms mitigate men's ability to support their spouses. Elkanah does not "have the courage to break through systemic oppressions and act freely in obedience to God's will."²² In this sense, Robinson's interpretation critiques Elkanah. He notes that society verbally abuses and stigmatizes Hannah and that Elkanah does not support her struggle with fertility.

Third, Robinson expounds on the power of prayer to address the stigmatization of Hannah's infertility. Here, he uses the religious category to solve the problem of Hannah's discrimination. He states: "It is the greatest of biblical revelation that we meet here with a God who responds to the cries of those who suffer discrimination and humiliation. This assurance has been the hope of all suffering people at all times."²³ For Robinson, God is the answer to the stigma of childlessness. Therefore, unsurprisingly he claims that Hannah's prayer resolves her infertile status, explaining that:

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 15.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 13.

Prayer is the means we have of opening ourselves to God. Hannah, through prayer, gives vent to her intense distress and pain (1 Sam. 1:11)... Faith in most religions is seen as a reciprocal relationship where the worshipper promises to do something or other or give God something, and God in return grants the prayer to the worshipper.²⁴

Robinson frames Hannah's petition as a form of personal suffering. He also views her prayer favorably, because it illustrates the close relationship between the faithful individual and God. In short, Hannah's prayer removes her marginalization, facilitates her acceptance in the community, and releases the pressure of her "intense distress and pain."²⁵

In sum, Robinson stresses the discrimination of Hannah's infertility. He also critiques Elkanah for not siding with his childless wife. To solve this issue, Robinson points to the power of prayer. He suggests that Hannah's faith in God resolves the problem of her infertility. His reading identifies Hannah's economic distress and his solution links fertility with faith. Thus, Robinson overtly critiques the patrilineal system that stigmatizes Hannah's infertility. However, his solution reinforces the religious association of piety with fecundity. Simply put, Robinson critiques the economic category of infertility and then uses the religious category as an answer.

2.2 Historical-Critical Interpretations Based on the Religious Category

The second group of historical-critical scholars uses the religious category to interpret Hannah's infertility. These commentaries identify involuntary childlessness as the result of divine punishment or inaction. Some observe a discrepancy between Hannah's piety and her condition. Others explain her infertility as a past sinful behavior. The following analysis examines the interpretations by P. Kyle McCarter, Walter Brueggemann, and Feidhlimidh T. Magennis.²⁶ The commentaries are in chronological order, from 1980 to 2012.

²⁴ Ibid., 16.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ P. Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 8 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1980); Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation 9 (Louisville, KY:

2.2.1 God's Power over Infertility: The Interpretation of P. Kyle McCarter

P. Kyle McCarter's commentary utilizes the religious category to address Hannah's childlessness. His interpretation emphasizes God's power over the process of human reproduction. He stresses that Hannah's infertility is not caused by a "sin" and instead posits that it is a symbol foreshadowing the Israelite monarchy. Thus, Hannah's childlessness reveals God's influence and guiding hand in the direction of ancient Israel. Further, McCarter projects Hannah's desire for a child onto the Israelite request for a king. Her child, Samuel, answers this particular request. Samuel represents God's answer to the question of kingship.

McCarter's interpretation underlines two points. First, he ties Hannah's infertility directly to God's authority, claiming that her childlessness reveals God's power over human reproduction. Notably, McCarter does not assert that Hannah's infertility is the result of God's punishment or anger.²⁷ Rather, Hannah's involuntary childlessness is symbolic. Her struggle with infertility indicates God's authority over worldly affairs. McCarter explains:

The expression [God remembered] implies more than simple calling to mind. Remembering, in the religious terminology of Israel and other Northwest Semite societies referred to the benevolent treatment of an individual or group by a god... Yahweh in his role as governor of childbirth (cf. 2:5b) has ensured the success of Hannah's union with her husband.²⁸

Here, McCarter highlights God's power as the "governor of childbirth." He hypothesizes that Hannah's infertility and eventual conception are part of God's plan. Consequently, Hannah's childlessness is not caused by her previous "sin." Her lack of children is part of God's strategy to institute a new form of government. McCarter articulates this connection between Hannah's

Westminster John Knox Press, 1990); Feidhlimidh T. Magennis, *First and Second Samuel*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

²⁷ Compare with Ackroyd: "The childless wife was thought in ancient Israel to be in some way under divine displeasure." See, Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, 21.

²⁸ McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 62.

infertility and Israel's lack of a monarch when he writes: "The child whose birth is recounted is to become the single figure under whose direction the old system will dissolve."²⁹ In McCarter's interpretation, infertility is not a central issue. Rather, it is a tool to understand God's power over worldly affairs.

Second, McCarter extends his proposition of God's authority to the entire Israelite community. He indicates that Hannah's infertility theologically foreshadows the Israelite monarchy, relating God's power over human reproduction to the governance of Israelite society. As he states: "The gift of a son to Hannah makes possible the working out of the divine plan at a crucial juncture in the history of the people."³⁰ His interpretation is more concerned with the future direction of Israelite leadership, than the alleviation of Hannah's infertility. Principally, Samuel's birth "sets in motion a chain of events that will begin with the inauguration of kingship in Israel and the rejection of Shiloh and the house of Eli."³¹ Thus, Hannah's conception and childbirth reveal God's power over Israel. While McCarter recognizes that Samuel's conception "is miraculous, the answer to a barren [*sic*] woman's prayer,"³² his exegesis reflects national concerns. He focuses on the forthcoming kingship as opposed to one childless woman. Accordingly, he suggests that Hannah's infertility is a symbol for the change in Israelite leadership. Her child personifies a new era, the dawn of the Israelite monarchy.

In sum, McCarter's commentary firmly establishes God's divine plan for the people of Israel. Hannah's infertility symbolizes the need for new governance in ancient Israel. Her conception brings that new leader. More importantly, Hannah's childlessness is not a "sin."

²⁹ Ibid., 64.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Rather, it conveys God's will to the Israelite community.³³ Importantly however, McCarter does not explore the theological implications of God's control over Hannah's infertility. His use of the religious category indirectly legitimizes Hannah's stigmatization, because her childlessness is a tool that effectively demonstrates God's divine plan. McCarter tolerates Hannah's discrimination given that God alleviates her infertility at the end of the story. For McCarter, Hannah's infertility is not a central issue but a tool to examine God's power over human affairs.

2.2.2 Infertility and the Broken Covenant: The Interpretation of Walter Brueggemann

Walter Brueggemann also uses the religious category in his reading of 1 Samuel 1. He proposes that Hannah's "suffering" signifies Israel's broken covenantal relationship with the divine. Thus, Brueggemann hypothesizes that this narrative works on two levels. First, the stigma of Hannah's infertility is a family drama. It influences the relationship between Hannah, Peninnah, and Elkanah. Second, the familial dynamic functions as a microcosm for the national issue of kingship. Samuel's birth resolves both the familial and national dramas.

Brueggemann's analysis of 1 Samuel 1 focuses on these two levels. On the first level, he postulates that the religious category of Hannah's infertility relates directly to a familial struggle over "barrenness [*sic*]: no child, no son, no heir, no future."³⁴ He contends that Elkanah's and Peninnah's interaction with Hannah signals their contradictory reaction to her childlessness, explaining: "The incongruity in the scene is between the love Elkanah has for Hannah... and the fact of barrenness [*sic*] wrought by Yahweh.... The outcome is provoked by a woman, abused by her rival, Peninnah more vexed by Yahweh's foreclosure of her future."³⁵ On the one hand, Elkanah's love conflicts with the religious category of infertility. Hannah's childlessness,

³³ As McCarter puts it: The birth conveys "Yahweh's will... to this generation of Israelites as they undertake the heavy responsibility of change." Ibid.

³⁴ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 12.

³⁵ Ibid., 13.

brought about by divine intervention, is incongruous with Elkanah's deep affection. On the other hand, Peninnah's mistreatment enhances the stigma of Hannah's infertility. Brueggemann thus presents these conflicting responses to Hannah's childlessness as the central issue of chapter 1. Hannah struggles with her husband and his co-wife, with the theme of divine punishment subtly reinforcing her marginalization. Notably, Brueggemann does not challenge the religious category of infertility. He acknowledges Peninnah's discrimination of Hannah on the basis of her childlessness. Nevertheless, he also unfavorably contrasts Hannah's infertility with Elkanah's love. Brueggemann is unclear for the reason for Hannah's condition. He attributes her childlessness to God, although he does not address whether it is caused by a sin. Rather, Brueggemann presents her involuntary childlessness as an unanswered prayer. God has not heard the petition of this infertile woman.

On the second level, Brueggemann projects the family drama onto the Israelite community. He demonstrates the national impact of Samuel's birth and identifies both Hannah and her son as "creatures of God's sovereignty and agents of God's intended future."³⁶ By introducing the religious category, Brueggemann is able to draw a direct comparison between the personal issue of infertility and the Israelite desire for a monarchy. Hannah's involuntary childlessness "functions as a paradigm for the entire drama of Israel's faithful waiting as it is presented in the Samuel narrative."³⁷ In other words, Hannah's infertility symbolizes Israel's kinglessness. This crucial detail shapes Brueggemann's analysis of Hannah's conception. He rejects the "modern propensity to inquire about biological miracles,"³⁸ and instead argues:

The narrative wants us to notice Yahweh as the key actor. The narrative invites us to wait in our trouble with such a focus on God, to see if prayers can be uttered, if vows can be

³⁶ Ibid., 10.

³⁷ Ibid., 11-12.

³⁸ Ibid., 15.

made, if gifts can be received.... When all of that becomes possible among us, we are prepared for the story of Israel's new life.³⁹

Here, Brueggemann emphasizes the importance of God's power. Hannah's infertility, considered a familial issue on the first level, is afforded a communal theological solution. God brings about Hannah's conception and inaugurates Israel's new life under the monarchy.

In sum, Brueggemann's analysis of 1 Samuel 1 asserts the religious significance of Hannah's infertility for the Israelite community. She symbolizes Israel's desire for a monarch and her offspring brings about such political change. Yet, Brueggemann's interpretation sidelines Hannah's infertility in favor of grand theological exposition. He does not challenge the stigmatization Hannah encounters. Further, he utilizes her marginalization as a symbol for Israel's communal suffering.

2.2.3 Critique of the Judges Cycle: The Interpretation of Feidhlimidh T. Magennis

Feidhlimidh T. Magennis stresses the religious category of Hannah's infertility in his commentary that addresses the national crisis of monarchic governance. He theorizes that Hannah's prayer for a son does not directly address her childlessness, but the religious hope for a monarch. Therefore, her infertility is symbolic. Hannah is a national hero whose prayer inaugurates a new political social system in ancient Israel. In this sense, Magennis suggests that Hannah's childlessness symbolizes the move from the period of the judges to the Israelite monarchy.

Magennis's exegesis follows two steps. First, he proposes that the theological implications of Hannah's childlessness speak to this national crisis of governance. His interpretation focuses on how Hannah's infertility relates to the Israelite judicial governmental system. He states:

³⁹ Ibid.

Hannah's situation is distressing, but the narrator suggests a deeper conflict. The Lord has made Hannah barren [*sic*].... The narrator has sketched out a family crisis that is both theological in nature and national in scope. Hannah's problem reflects Israel's crisis of relationship with the Lord.⁴⁰

Magennis claims that Hannah's involuntary childlessness is the direct result of God's power over reproductive capacity. Moreover, he posits that her infertility embodies the broken relationship between God and Israel. Like Brueggemann, Magennis frames Hannah's infertility as a symbol for a communal theological dilemma. He also suggests that Hannah's suffering is due to the lack of organized Israelite leadership. These two issues undergird Magennis's claim, that Hannah prays for a new judge to lead her people. He indicates that Hannah prays for a "child who will save her from torment [and] also save Israel."⁴¹ Magennis thus frames Hannah's petition as symbolic. He postulates that her prayer, like her infertility, illustrates the Israelite effort to renew a relationship with God. Hannah does not ask for a child for personal satisfaction, but to establish a new political system in ancient Israel.⁴²

Second, because of her petition Magennis presents Hannah as the hero of 1 Samuel 1.⁴³ He does not dwell upon Hannah's infertility and does not identify the stigmatization of childlessness as vital to her characterization. Rather, for Magennis "Hannah's concern may appear personal, but her vow has national implications."⁴⁴ Her prayer establishes the inadequacy of the current political system. Furthermore, God's response to her petition seemingly endorses

⁴⁰ Magennis, *First and Second Samuel*, 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴² Magennis drives home this point in his analysis of Hannah's song in 1 Sam. 2:1-10: "Her song expands beyond her personal situation to include the Lord's dealings with his people. That double focus is suitable for a story which has personal and national dimensions. *Ibid.*, 13. Similarly, Chapman's commentary stresses that Hannah's prayer operates on both a personal and national level. He proposes that this shift from "rote ritualism" to the "interior dimension to religious belief" marks a significant change in the religious life of ancient Israel. He favorably contrasts Hannah with Eli, the latter of whom should recognize this internal prayer but does not. See, Chapman, *1 Samuel as Christian Scripture*, 77.

⁴³ Although Magennis strongly emphasizes Samuel's role as the savior for both Hannah and the Israelite community in 1 Samuel 1, he does not argue that Samuel is the central character. See, Magennis, *First and Second Samuel*, 13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

the change to monarchic governance. In this sense, the birth of Hannah's son marks the transition from the period of the judges to the monarchy. Samuel's leadership foreshadows the Davidic dynasty.

In sum, Magennis downplays the stigmatization of infertility in favor of highlighting the relationship between Israel and God. He presents Hannah as a symbol for the Israelite community. Further, he uses her childlessness as a metaphor for Israel's longing for a monarchy. Magennis thus presents Hannah as a national hero. Her prayer inaugurates a new political system, moving from the period of the judges to the Davidic dynasty. Consequently, Magennis does not critique the religious category of infertility. He does not address Hannah's theological discrimination. Instead, he is interested in how Hannah's fertility foreshadows the monarchy. Her conception is the solution to the Israelite desire for a new system of governance.

2.3 Literary Interpretations Based on the Economic Category

The third group of literary scholars focuses on the economic category of Hannah's infertility. These researchers underscore the demand for reproduction in ancient Israel. They also highlight Hannah's desire to secure her economic future by having a child. Essentially these scholars argue that fertility drives the narrative forward. They stress that the economic issues of infertility shape the characterization of Hannah, Elkanah, and Peninnah. The following analysis explores the works of J. P. Fokkelman, Philip Esler, and Robert Alter.⁴⁵ The commentaries are discussed in chronological order and range from 1993 to 2013.

⁴⁵ J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, Vol. IV Vow and Desire 1 Sam. 1-12 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993); Philip E. Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Old Testament Narrative with its Ancient Audience* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2012); Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings a Translation with Commentary* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013). See also Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative: Revised and Updated*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011); Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999).

2.3.1 *The Psychological Profiles of Hannah's Family: The Interpretation of J. P. Fokkelman*

J. P. Fokkelman's commentary uses the economic category to analyze the psychological profiles of Elkanah and Peninnah in 1 Samuel 1. He argues that Hannah's infertility directly impacts these character's lives. Hannah does not contribute children to support the *pater familias*. She is an economic liability to the survival of the family. In this sense, Fokkelman proposes that Hannah's childlessness is the key problem in this text. Her infertility leads directly to Elkanah's chastisement. It also influences Peninnah's jealousy. Both characters, in different ways, relate and respond to Hannah's involuntary childlessness.

Fokkelman's commentary discusses two topics. He first stresses the importance of children to the economic security of the *pater familias*. Fokkelman describes Hannah's childlessness as "the children versus no children problem."⁴⁶ He further maintains that this issue directly impacts the power of "the *pater familias*."⁴⁷ The father of the house requires offspring to ensure his survival. Hannah's infertility thus endangers the family line and weakens their economic prowess. Consequently, Hannah's childlessness is the central issue for this narrative. As Fokkelman states: "What was socially and psychologically speaking of central importance for the married woman [was to] become a mother."⁴⁸ Hannah does not fit this role. Her marginal status influences her interactions with Elkanah and Peninnah. Their conversations express a "preoccupation with continuity via offspring" that "plays with this idea of fertility."⁴⁹ They express an understanding of the importance of fertility to the *pater familias* and marginalize Hannah based on her infertile status.

⁴⁶ Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, 20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

Next, Fokkelman extends his analysis to the psychological profiles of Elkanah and Peninnah. He theorizes that the emphasis on the economic value of childbirth in the story leads to Elkanah's chastisement. Likewise, he suggests that Peninnah is jealous of her co-wife because Hannah does not contribute to the economic welfare of the family. Fokkelman asserts that these rebukes are understandable given Hannah's infertility. For instance, he presents Elkanah as a laudable figure because he does not divorce Hannah despite her childlessness.⁵⁰ Further, Fokkelman maintains that Elkanah's rebuke underscores his "unrelenting grief" at the "inability to alter [Hannah's] childless condition."⁵¹ Elkanah's rhetorical question, "Am I not better than ten sons," echoes the financial support he gives to Hannah and "reveals the fact that he knows very well that Hannah is so sad because she is childless."⁵² Similarly, Fokkelman lauds the figure of Peninnah because of her successful integration into the patrilineal system. She, unlike Hannah, has attained the status of motherhood. Her rebuke, therefore, is based on Elkanah's lack of affection: "This situation rubs her nose in the fact that bearing many children to Elkanah cannot guarantee his love."⁵³ In this sense, Fokkelman sympathizes with Peninnah's position. She is an economic contributor who remains secondary to the family. This remains true regardless of the value she brings to Elkanah's name. As Fokkelman laments: "Perhaps it is beyond Peninnah's ken that a woman who remains childless can still rely on the affection of the *pater familias*."⁵⁴

In sum, Fokkelman's commentary highlights the psychological profiles of Elkanah and Peninnah. He helps readers grasp how Hannah's childlessness influences the characterization of both figures. He grapples with Elkanah's anguish and Peninnah's jealousy. But surprisingly

⁵⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 29.

⁵³ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Fokkelman has little to say on Hannah's experience of infertility. He does not directly address her anguish or the stigma of her childlessness. According to Fokkelman, Hannah's childlessness is an economic problem that primarily shapes the characters of Elkanah and Peninnah in the text.

2.3.2 *An Anthropological Analysis of Infertility: The Interpretation of Philip Esler*

Philip Esler also interprets 1 Samuel 1 using the economic category of Hannah's infertility. He incorporates anthropological data on childlessness to argue that Hannah explicitly supports Elkanah's reproductive strategy. Further, he asserts that she relies on the birth of Peninnah's child for her economic security. To support this hypothesis, Esler includes "social-scientific ideas and perspectives" that are "closely related to the Israelite setting of its first audience."⁵⁵ He compares Elkanah's bigamous marriage with polygamy among Palestinian Arabs in the 1920s and 1930s.

Esler's interpretation follows two steps. First, he points out the economic necessity of children among Palestinian Arabs to conceptualize the original context of Hannah's infertility. He incorporates anthropological studies on the practice of polygamy among Palestinian Arabs in the 1920s and 1930s to ascertain the original economic context of Hannah's infertility. Esler draws heavily on the work of Hilma Granqvist to suggest:

[Hannah's failure] to produce children put her husband and herself in a difficult position. The overriding need to preserve the family property was thus imperiled. Elkanah would also have faced the shame involved in his paternal line of five generations, including himself, coming to an end.⁵⁶

Esler frames Hannah's infertility as a problem for the entire family. He stresses Elkanah's financial loss.⁵⁷ Specifically, Esler notes the lack of child laborers, the imperilment of the

⁵⁵ Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors*, 112.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁵⁷ Esler also recognizes that Hannah "would certainly suffer on her own account." However, Hannah's "suffering" is secondary to his interpretation. *Ibid.*

family's property, and the lack of a patrilineal legacy. In this reading, Hannah's infertility jeopardizes Elkanah's prosperity. Her inability to produce an heir places the entire family in a fragile economic position.

Second, Esler uses his anthropological data to legitimize Elkanah's bigamous marriage to Peninnah. He argues that Hannah and Elkanah's tenuous economic situation leads to this solution. He explains:

Under these circumstances, Elkanah had little choice but to take a second wife so he could father the sons that were necessary for the well-being of them all. The comparable material from Palestine invites us to imagine a woman in Hannah's situation seeing the wisdom in this and perhaps even pushing her husband to take such a step.⁵⁸

Esler engages in a hypothetical fantasy as the biblical narrative is silent on Hannah support of living in a polygamous marriage. To buttress his theory, Esler cites stories from the experiences of Palestinian Arabs to show that Hannah would have found a second wife economically valuable. The commentator directly quotes one woman "who had insisted that her husband (over his initial objection) take a second wife because upon his death his relatives would take possession of the property and force her to leave."⁵⁹ Esler thus suggests that Hannah would support bigamous marriage to Peninnah. Still, he also maintains that the stigma of Hannah's infertility continues after the birth of Elkanah's children: "From Hannah's point of view, [polygamy] was a solution that improved the likelihood that she would not be displaced if Elkanah died. Nevertheless, it did nothing for the disgrace she experienced because of her barrenness [*sic*]."⁶⁰ Said differently, Hannah's economic security increases dramatically upon the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 115. See also Hilma Granqvist, *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village* (Helsingfors: Centraltryckeri och Bokbinderi Ab., 1931).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 122.

birth of Peninnah's child. Yet, she remains marginalized for her inability to contribute to the economic welfare of the family.

In sum, Esler views polygamous marriage as an economic necessity for the survival of Elkanah's family. To support this argument, he offers an anthropological comparison between Palestinian Arabs and 1 Samuel 1. His comparative reading disregards the experience of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. It does not address the stigmatization of her infertility. Rather, Esler emphasizes the importance of polygamous marriage to the continuation of Elkanah's family line. He presents childbirth as the only way for Hannah to truly escape this economic problem.

2.3.3 Infertility and the Annunciation Type-Scene: The Interpretation of Robert Alter

Robert Alter also relies on the economic category in his analysis of Hannah's relationship to the annunciation type-scene. He claims that this type of narrative reflects the economic concerns of human reproduction. They show the importance of children to the economic survival of ancient Israelite families. Economic considerations thus shape the importance of fecundity to the resolution of the type-scene. Further, Alter highlights the unique features of Hannah's story. He examines her faithfulness to God. He also favorably contrasts her with Eli the priest. Alter suggests that these aspects of 1 Samuel 1 foreshadow the transfer of power from Eli's sons to Samuel.

Alter's interpretation proceeds two parts. In the first part, he shows that the economic concerns of human reproduction relate to the annunciation type-scene. He notes: "All annunciation stories must be understood in light of the prevalent ancient Near Eastern view that a

woman's one great avenue to fulfillment in life was through the bearing of sons."⁶¹ Put another way, Hannah's emotional and economic future are linked to the birth of her child. Further, he observes that infertility shapes other characters in the narrative. For instance, Alter suggests that Elkanah is unable "to understand how inconsolable [Hannah] feels about her affliction of barrenness [*sic*]."⁶² This is because of his own relatively secure economic position, since Elkanah already has children through Peninnah.⁶³ Alter thus utilizes historiographic evidence to ascertain both Hannah's and Elkanah's motivations. Hannah tries to conceive to gain economic security. Elkanah cannot relate to her predicament given the security already established through his other offspring. For both characters, Alter incorporates "excavative" or archaeological evidence on infertility to support his hypothesis that childlessness is an issue of economic survival.⁶⁴

In the second part, Alter explores the unique features that sets 1 Samuel 1 apart from the annunciation type-scene.⁶⁵ He focuses on the distortion of the annunciation motif and highlights two points of comparison.⁶⁶ First, Alter claims that Eli's role as the divine messenger is "a parody of the annunciating figure of the conventional type-scene."⁶⁷ Eli fails to comprehend Hannah's mutterings as a prayer and unwittingly supports her petition for a child. The child who, ultimately, takes Eli's position. Second, Alter presents Hannah's gift of her child as a personal

⁶¹ Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 242. See also Alter, *The David Story*, 4; Theodore W. Burgh, "1-2 Samuel," in *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Hugh R. Page and Randall C. Bailey (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 124.

⁶² Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 242.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ It is intriguing that Alter utilizes the "excavative" or archaeological evidence he directly critiques to support this portrayal of biblical infertility. See, e.g., Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 14-17.

⁶⁵ This convention has three major parts: "the report of the wife's barrenness [*sic*]... the promise, through oracle or divine messenger or man of God, of the birth of a son; [and] cohabitation resulting in conception and birth. See, Alter, *The David Story*, 3

⁶⁶ Alter notes that "the central annunciation motif of the type-scene is purposefully distorted" in 1 Samuel 1. See, Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 243.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

economic sacrifice, noting that “the powerful biological bond between Hannah and the longed-for baby... points to the pain of separation she must accept.”⁶⁸ In this way, Alter valorizes Hannah’s faithfulness. He distinguishes between her voluntary sacrifice of economic security and the ignorance Eli displays at Shiloh. These characteristics, in turn, reflect positively on Hannah’s son Samuel and prefigure the downfall and death of Eli and his children. In short, Alter proposes that the story subverts the traditional portrayal of the divine envoy to undermine Eli’s authority and to pave the way for Samuel’s prophetic mission.

In sum, Alter’s interpretation contrasts the annunciation type-scenes with the unique features found in 1 Samuel 1. He aptly describes the economic problem of childlessness in this narrative. Further, he uses this economic issue to highlight the importance of Hannah’s sacrifice of her son. However, Alter’s interpretation does not take up the subject of the discrimination of Hannah’s childlessness. He presents Hannah’s infertility as a narratological device which foreshadows the downfall of Eli’s family and the rise of Samuel. In this sense, Alter’s reading focuses more on Samuel’s mission than Hannah’s marginalization.

2.4 Literary Interpretations Based on the Religious Category

The fourth group of literary exegetes interprets Hannah’s childlessness using the religious category. They stress the importance of God’s role in the reproductive process. Further, they present infertility as a form of theological punishment. The following analysis examines the work of Peter D. Miscall, Robert Polzin, and John Petersen in the order of their publications.⁶⁹ Their research dates from 1986 to 2004.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 245. See also Alter, *The David Story*, 7.

⁶⁹ Peter D. Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986); Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History: Part Two 1 Samuel* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1989); An earlier version of Polzin’s interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 can be found in “The Speaking Person and His Voice in 1 Samuel,” *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 36 (1985): 218-229; John Petersen, *Reading Women’s Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2004).

2.4.1 Deconstructing Retributive Theology: The Interpretation of Peter D. Miscall

Peter D. Miscall provides a deconstructive analysis of the Deuteronomistic theology using the religious category of infertility. His interpretation exposes the fallacy of this religious system. He argues that the retributive system cycles between Israel's destruction and restoration. The importance of 1 Samuel 1 relates to its place in this cycle. Consequently, Miscall downplays Hannah's infertility. He is primarily concerned with how her childlessness relates to the issue of retributive justice. He argues that her petition for a child reaffirms the covenantal relationship between God and Israel.

Miscall's commentary follows two steps. First, he describes his deconstructive framework and his issues with the Deuteronomic system of retributive justice. He sets out to undermine and subvert dichotomies which "support an essentialist interpretation"⁷⁰ of Deuteronomistic theology. One binary that Miscall explores is between sin and righteousness. As Miscall explains: "The source or beginning of Israel's problems is her continuing to do what is evil in the Lord's eyes. But what is not provided is an explanation of why Israel survives."⁷¹ The central problem then is the inconsistencies of the Deuteronomistic retributive theological system. Israel continually sins yet endures despite its faithlessness. This discrepancy undermines the efficacy of the retributive framework.

Second, Miscall theorizes that "1 Samuel does not begin with a specific problem or crisis that is to be addressed and corrected."⁷² Rather, it is the continuation of the judges cycle. Samuel's birth is not a problem but a solution, a reaffirmation of a covenantal relationship between Israel and God after the murder and rape detailed in Judges 19-21.⁷³ This makes

⁷⁰ Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading*, xxii.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁷² Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading*, 11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5-7.

Hannah's son Samuel the center of scholarly focus. Samuel is the hero who resolves the issue of Israel's faithlessness. Miscall asks: "Will he be like... Samson, or will he be a new type of savior?"⁷⁴ His interpretation thus focuses on Samuel's role in the narrative. By highlighting Samuel's birth, Miscall transforms Hannah's infertility from a personal to a national issue. Both Samuel and Samson are born to mothers who struggle with involuntary childlessness. Further, both heroes are God's response to Israel's repentance in the Deuteronomistic retributive cycle.

In sum, Miscall's interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 stresses its place in the Deuteronomistic retributive cycle. It downplays Hannah's infertility and instead affirms the restorative power of Samuel's birth. Theologically, Miscall views Hannah's conception favorably. The birth of Samuel marks a change in the cycle "since something new is about to happen."⁷⁵ Yet, Miscall does not address the stigma of infertility in this story. He recognizes that "Samuel comes to relieve [Hannah] of her misery,"⁷⁶ but then immediately follows this statement with the claim that: "The reflex calls attention to the lack of a threatening situation from which Samuel can rescue the people."⁷⁷ According to Miscall, this story illustrates the irony of God saving a faithless Israel. Or, as he puts it: "No matter what Israel does... she is not destroyed."⁷⁸

2.4.2 *Infertility and the Artistry of the Deuteronomist: The Interpretation of Robert Polzin*

Like Miscall, Robert Polzin employs the religious category in his analysis of Hannah's infertility. Polzin suggests that the narrative speaks to the artistic talents of a Deuteronomistic editor. He claims that the redactor of this text uses Hannah's infertility to comment on Israel's mistaken desire for a king. He claims that the narrative rejects monarchic governance. He also

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1. Miscall is not the only literary critic to link infertility to the "birth of the hero" type-scene. See, e.g., Rachel Havrelock, "The Myth of Birthing the Hero: Heroic Barrenness in the Hebrew Bible," *Biblical Interpretation* 16 (2008): 154-78.

⁷⁵ Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading*, 8.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

asserts that Hannah's childlessness foreshadows the failure of the united monarchy. Her petition is a mistake. Likewise, Israel wrongly prays for a new system, a monarchy to rescue them from judicial leadership.

Polzin's interpretation proceeds in three parts. In the first part, he argues that this narrative is the work of a Deuteronomistic editor who evokes theological questions regarding the legitimacy of the Israelite monarchy. His commentary focuses on the "evaluation of the [Deuteronomistic] History as a unified work and of Dtr as its artful author."⁷⁹ According to Polzin, this "artist" is a theological historian who weaves together the narratives encompassing Deuteronomy through 2 Kings. The editor composes this extensive work to explain the rise and fall of the Israelite monarchy.⁸⁰ Consequently, Polzin's interpretation does not focus on the features of specific biblical texts. Rather, he emphasizes how these stories function together as a literary unit that reflects the artistic talents of a Deuteronomistic editor.⁸¹

In the second part, Polzin claims that Hannah's infertility illustrates the artistry of the Deuteronomistic editor. He identifies her efforts to conceive as a "prospective statement about the entire book" of 1 Samuel.⁸² Put another way, Polzin posits that the Deuteronomistic historian introduces the theme of retributive theology using Hannah's failed reproductive efforts. Her childlessness leads to ostracization. Her conception to social restoration. More importantly, Hannah symbolizes Israel's desire for a monarch. Her childlessness, Israel's separation from God. Notably, Polzin stresses that the negative characterization of Hannah's infertility proceeds

⁷⁹ Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 9.

⁸⁰ On this point, Polzin contrasts the competing models of the Deuteronomistic historian offered by Martin Noth, Frank Cross, and John van Seters. *Ibid.*, 9-17.

⁸¹ Polzin highlights this literary unity even as he "emphasizes the destructive implications of such views: whatever literary unity the books of Samuel may have enjoyed through the literary genius of Dtr was destroyed... by later redactor(s) whose clumsy insertions of texts... have damaged the integrity and coherence of a once pristine text." *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 18.

from the convictions of her community rather than the Deuteronomist.⁸³ Hannah is socially marginalized by her family who believe that God caused her infertility. The Deuteronomist uses Hannah's ostracization to comment on the state of Israelite leadership. This artist captures the essence of Hannah's childlessness to offer a religious repudiation of the Israelite demand for a monarch.

In the third part, Polzin uses Hannah's prayer as a prospective statement on Israelite leadership. Namely, he suggests that Hannah's desire for a child "is intended to introduce, foreshadow, and ideologically comment upon the story of Israel's request for a king."⁸⁴ In this sense, Polzin recasts the religious argument put forward by Brueggemann, placing the request for kingship in the mind of the Deuteronomistic editor rather than the Israelite community. In his interpretation of Eli's chastisement, for instance, Polzin hypothesizes that "kingship in Israel is a matter of drunken desire, a mistake."⁸⁵ For the Deuteronomistic artist, Hannah represents the Israelite community. Her petition for a child is equated to the community's desire for monarchic rule. Eli's rebuke represents an editorial critique of the monarchy. Polzin suggests that Eli's reprimand, ironically spoken to the sober Hannah, chastises Israel's "drunken" petition for a king. Similarly, Polzin extends the critique of the monarchy to Hannah's argument with her husband Elkanah. He compares verse 8 to 1 Sam. 8:7 and projects Elkanah's question, whether he is more important to Hannah than ten sons, into the mouth of God.⁸⁶ In this sense, the Deuteronomist uses Hannah's social exclusion, theological punishment, and chastisement to

⁸³ Ibid., 20.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁸⁶ In 1 Sam. 8:7 the Israelite people reject Samuel's and God's leadership. They instead demand the establishment of an earthly king.

foreshadow the failure of the monarchy. Her efforts to conceive are a “prospective statement” for Israel’s desire to move away from a relationship with YHWH.⁸⁷

In sum, Polzin presents Hannah’s infertility as a symbol for the broken relationship between God and Israel. Her childlessness is a prospective statement that foretells Israel’s desire for a monarch. It also foreshadows the failure of said monarchy. Since Polzin focuses on the artistic role of the Deuteronomistic historian, Hannah’s infertility is secondary to his literary analysis. He identifies that her involuntary childlessness evokes theological questions on the legitimacy of the monarchy. Nevertheless, by elevating Hannah’s role as a symbol for Israel, Polzin relegates the issue of the discrimination of her infertility.

2.4.3 Infertility and Character Development: The Interpretation of John Petersen

John Petersen also employs the religious category in his analysis of Hannah’s childlessness. His book includes this story for its dynamic characters. He proposes that 1 Samuel 1 helps readers understand character development in biblical texts. Specifically, he highlights the interpersonal relationship among Hannah, her husband, and his co-wife. Petersen uses the religious category of infertility to comment on Hannah’s mistreatment by Elkanah and Peninnah and to convey Hannah’s personal growth. He implicitly rejects this religious category, although he argues that the characters in the story do not.

Petersen’s interpretation highlights two features. First, he emphasizes that the religious stigma of Hannah’s infertility shapes the interpersonal relationship among the family members, claiming: “Hannah’s barrenness [*sic*] plays out in the opening words and actions as the adults in

⁸⁷ Still, Polzin recognizes that in both cases God relents. Hannah does bear a child who, in turn, anoints both Saul and David. As he suggests, Hannah’s prayer regarding the poor and infertile marks the reversal of expectations for an earthly kingship: “In contrast to the mighty men of Israel, now barren figures in exile, the only Israelites in the story who remain in Jerusalem at the end are the poor. The Deuteronomist makes this point not once but twice, as if to reinforce the final message.” See, Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 38.

the family interrelate on the basis of fertility.”⁸⁸ Her involuntary childlessness is the issue leading to tension within this family. Further, Petersen stresses that the religious category plays a role in Elkanah’s and Peninnah’s characterization. They legitimize their mistreatment of Hannah using “the façade of divine rejection.”⁸⁹ Put another way, Petersen hypothesizes that Elkanah and Peninnah both believe that Hannah sinned, rendering her infertile. This argumentation recognizes that the Deuteronomistic concept of retributive theology influences Elkanah and Peninnah. Both characters use the category to justify their antagonistic relationship with Hannah. Still, by positing that this framework is a façade, Petersen implicitly rejects the legitimacy of the religious category. He continues to use it, but only to explain the “embedded viewpoints of Elkanah and Peninnah.”⁹⁰ Read in this fashion, Hannah’s abuse is not the result of God’s action or inaction. Rather, it arises from the family’s interaction on the issue of Hannah’s childlessness.

Second, Petersen shows that the stigma of childlessness leads to Hannah’s personal growth, allowing her to restore the family’s bond. Specifically, he gives prominence to Hannah’s “victimization” and lauds her for finding “the personal resources to redirect her life beyond the abuse she receives.”⁹¹ She overcomes her stigmatization and mends the broken relationship with Elkanah and Peninnah through her conception. As Petersen argues: “Hannah’s “barrenness [*sic*]... generates the tension, and her personal progress resolves the plot.”⁹² Petersen thus makes this story about Hannah’s growth and transformation rather than Elkanah’s and Peninnah’s discrimination. As he maintains: “In dealing with her own barrenness [*sic*] and despair, Hannah

⁸⁸ Petersen, *Reading Women’s Stories*, 27.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Petersen elaborates on this point, “They think that the Lord made Hannah infertile, justifying their own attitude and behavior.”

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 53.

repaired the broken relationships within the family... and [brought] fulfillment in what becomes, finally, a tale of family restoration.”⁹³

In sum, Petersen uses the religious category of infertility to comment on the interpersonal relationship among Hannah’s family. Although he does not subscribe to this category, he finds it helpful to describe the motivations of Elkanah and Peninnah in the text. Petersen highlights the stigma of Hannah’s childlessness. Further, he critiques Elkanah and Peninnah over their religious convictions. However, Petersen also ties Hannah’s growth to her conception. He makes her transformation to a fertile mother responsible for the restoration of the family bond. In short, Petersen highlights Hannah’s stigmatization and personal growth to comment on her interactions with Elkanah and Peninnah. Her fecundity is principally a narratological device with which Petersen examines interpersonal relationships.

2.5 Beyond the Biblical Rhetoric of “Barrenness” in 1 Samuel 1: A Conclusion

The readings analyzed in this chapter illustrate four prominent groupings of Hannah’s infertility in English-language biblical research on 1 Samuel 1 published in the last five decades. The first group are historical-critical scholars who examine economics. They describe Hannah’s infertility as a personal or familial financial disadvantage. The group contends that this text must be understood in a pronatalist setting that relies on human reproduction for manual labor, property inheritance, and the protection of parents in old-age. Consequently, historical exegetes using the economic category rarely identify Hannah’s stigmatization and instead normalize the historical explanation for her marginalization. The second group are historical-critical scholars who focus on the religious dimensions of infertility. This group proposes that divine retribution or inattention to Hannah’s childlessness undergird her discrimination in 1 Samuel 1. They often

⁹³ Ibid., 69.

link Hannah's infertility with the Israelite request for a monarch. Since these exegetes locate the religious framework in a historical context, they do not give evidence to the validity of their argumentation. The third group are literary scholars who highlight economic issues. They hypothesize that the economics of childlessness shapes the characterization and personal interactions within Hannah's extended family. Exegetes of the third group consider Hannah's infertility the central subject of this biblical narrative. However, their focus on economics does not account for her marginalization. The fourth group are literary scholars who emphasize theology. These interpreters assert that Hannah's stigma is based on the Deuteronomistic retributive framework. They reinforce and critique this model to describe Hannah's lack of children in the story.

The analysis of the selected commentaries discloses the shortcomings of historical and literary interpretations of 1 Samuel 1. In each group, Hannah's childlessness is a tool, plot device, or historical fact leading to general economic or religious claims. Many of the readings do not focus specifically on Hannah's marginalization. Instead, they make broader claims on the economic and religious significance of this biblical text. Moreover, they do not critique the economic and religious categories that stigmatize childlessness and marginalize Hannah's social status. The four groups accept the economic and religious categories in their historical and literary interpretations. Further, the commentaries do not underscore the importance of Hannah's experience of involuntary childlessness. Their analyses are limited to how childlessness is portrayed socially, historically, and theologically. These three shortcomings suggest the need for an interpretation grounded in the experiences of infertile individuals and couples. Such an approach highlights the importance of economic and religious categories in the biblical description of Hannah's infertility, even as it critiques the discrimination of her childlessness.

The next chapter examines another set of interpretations on 1 Samuel 1 by disability and feminist exegetes. We shall see that they also rely on the economic and religious categories in their analyses of Hannah's childlessness.

3. Disability and Feminist Interpretations of Infertility in 1 Samuel 1

This chapter analyzes disability and feminist interpretations of 1 Samuel 1 as they appear in English-language scholarship published between 1979 and 2018. These readings highlight Hannah's able-bodiedness and gender, and they offer a stark critique of the economic and religious categories of childlessness. Disability and feminist approaches offer alternatives to these categories by centering on Hannah's infertility. Furthermore, they expand the discourse on involuntary childlessness and show that the biblical story stigmatizes Hannah. These interpretations thus move beyond conceptualizations of Hannah's infertility that exclusively emphasize economic or religious factors. They challenge the surface-level economic and religious readings of infertility in the cultural-literary context of the text.

The nine interpretations analyzed in this chapter are particularly important for their focus on Hannah's infertility. In choosing them, five reasons stand out. First, disability and feminist studies are two prominent approaches that discuss Hannah's infertility. Disability scholars emphasize the historical reconstruction of infertility as a form of disability whereas feminist theorists highlight the importance of Hannah's gender in regard to her childlessness. Second, disability and feminist exegetes utilize and critique the economic and religious categories of Hannah's infertility. They challenge interpretations that center on Hannah's theological and economic marginalization. Third, disability and feminist interpreters prominently feature Hannah's infertility in their work, dating from 1979 to the present. Fourth, their readings engage Hannah's infertility in creative ways. Fifth, these interpretations illustrate that biblical scholars

have not, to this point, engaged social-scientific models on infertility. For these five reasons, disability and feminist interpretations of 1 Samuel 1 represent a particularly rich body of literature for studying discourse on Hannah's infertility in biblical scholarship.

Three sections structure the chapter. The first section analyzes disability scholarship on Hannah's infertility. It explores how disability interpreters define Hannah's childlessness as a disability in the context of ancient Israel. They historicize infertility by stressing economic and religious reasons for childlessness in 1 Samuel 1. The second section highlights the "depatriarchalizing" strategy in feminist interpretations of Hannah's infertility. Feminist exegetes critique the economic and religious categories. Some idealize Hannah as a heroic mother figure while others establish the historical role of motherhood in ancient Israel. The third section examines feminist "rejectionist" interpretations of 1 Samuel 1. Rejectionist readings present Hannah's reproductive strategy as a product of patriarchal ideology. They incorporate economic and religious categories in their critique of motherhood as a normative role in kyriarchy. The conclusion discusses how disability and feminist interpreters rely on the economic and the religious categories to indicate the need for a hermeneutic of reproduction.

3.1 Disability Interpretations of Infertility: Hannah as a Disabled Woman

The first hermeneutical approach focuses on Hannah's infertility as a disability. In fact, many exegetes working with this approach define infertility as a culturally constructed impairment.¹ They historicize infertility, identifying it as a disability in the context of ancient

¹ Disability biblical scholars use either a social or cultural model of disability. The social model evaluates the sociocultural discrimination of "impaired" individuals. This model stresses *impairment* which highlights the economic and religious marginalization of disabled individuals by society. The cultural model rejects the exclusive focus on impairment, and instead emphasizes reconstructing the historical-cultural context of disabilities. Scholars who use this model seek to objectively describe how disabilities were understood in the historical context of ancient Israel. See, Nyasha Junior and Jeremy Schipper, "Disability Studies and the Bible," in *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 22-27.

Israel. They refer to economic and religious views that inform the Israelite concept of infertility as a disability. Some emphasize the economic importance of fertility leading to the stigmatization of childlessness. Others employ the religious category to describe the cause of Hannah's marginalization. The following analysis takes up the interpretations by Hector Avalos, Jeremy Schipper, and Joel S. Baden in the chronological order of their publications, dating between 1995 and 2018.²

3.1.1 The Proto-Medical Treatment of Infertility: The Interpretation of Hector Avalos

Hector Avalos offers a historical-critical study of medical treatments of illnesses and disabilities in the ancient Near East. It includes a detailed discussion of biblical infertility. Avalos hypothesizes that Hannah's childlessness is a disease. He also contends that this narrative speaks to the proto-medical function of the priesthood. It was responsible for treating the religious and physical experience of infertility. Simply put, the temple was not only a place of worship, it was where people sought cures for their diseases. Because of her infertility, Hannah goes to Eli to try and treat her involuntary childlessness.

Two arguments characterize Avalos's interpretation. First, he examines one proto-medical treatment available to women in ancient Israel. He elaborates on the procedure using 1 Samuel 1. Avalos emphasizes the importance of the priesthood in the treatment of Hannah's

² Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995); Jeremy Schipper, "Disabling Israelite Leadership: 2 Samuel 6:23 and Other Images of Disability in the Deuteronomistic History," in *This Abled Body Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, ed. Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007); Jeremy Schipper, *Disability & Isaiah's Suffering Servant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Joel S. Baden, "The Nature of Barrenness in the Hebrew Bible," in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); Joel S. Baden, "The Matriarchs as Models," in *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Joel S. Baden, "Be Fruitful and Multiply: The Dangers of Divine Blessing," *Communitas: Journal of Education Beyond the Walls* 14 (2018): 4-8.

childlessness. After defining infertility as an illness in ancient Israel,³ he proposes that the temple in Shiloh offered three main procedures. The first is petitionary, the second therapeutic, and the third the offering of thanksgiving. In his interpretation of 1 Samuel 1, Avalos stresses the petitionary category. He hypothesizes that the temple “could have had a petitionary role for a wide variety of illnesses. This is reflected in Hannah’s use of the shrine... as a petitionary locus for infertility.”⁴ Hannah prays for a cure for her “illness.” Further, Avalos suggests that this proto-medical treatment, the petitionary prayer, is not unusual. He explains:

The legitimacy of the petitionary function for the shrine of Shiloh within the story is corroborated by the fact that such a function needs no explanation or justification.... It is one which is legitimated in the text by the very fact that Hannah’s petition was answered.⁵

In other words, Avalos maintains that Hannah’s petition is a codified action sanctioned by the temple. After all, the text does not try to justify Hannah’s prayer. Rather, her petition is readily accepted by Eli the priest. More importantly, her appeal is efficacious. Hannah’s conception, according to Avalos, speaks to the validity of the petitionary procedure.

Second, Avalos emphasizes the religious category of infertility in the treatment of Hannah’s childlessness. He identifies God as the cause of her condition, observing that: “The [Masoretic Text] specifically notes in verse 5 that Yahweh had closed her womb.”⁶ Thus, to Avalos, God is the central figure in the proto-medical treatment of infertility. Hannah prays to God, with the temple serving as the intermediary for her petition. In short, Hannah’s treatment is

³ Avalos defines an illness as “any culture’s categorization of deviations from a normal life which are linked with the malfunction of normal bodily practices.” He then claims that Hannah’s childlessness falls under this categorization. He notes that her childlessness is a type of malfunction. Further, he contends that Hannah’s infertility leads to her social displacement within her community. “Hannah seemed depressed by her condition, and she is treated as an inferior by the rival wife.” See, Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East*, 331-332.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 377.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 332.

a type of “medical theology.”⁷ The effectiveness of her cure relies on God’s power as the “sender/controller” over human reproduction.⁸ In short, Avalos’s interpretation emphasizes that the religious category is connected to medical treatments in ancient Israel. He postulates that the temple provides proto-medical procedures based on a religious understanding of God’s power and a rudimentary knowledge of medical practices.

In sum, Avalos places Hannah’s infertility in a historical discussion on proto-medical treatments of diseases in the Israelite temple. He describes Hannah’s involuntary childlessness as an illness linked to the “malfunction of normal bodily processes.”⁹ He also stresses the importance of petitionary prayer in the treatment of her infertility. Avalos uses the religious category to highlight God’s role as the controller of fertility. However, like other historical-critical scholars, Avalos neither directly critiques Hannah’s social stigmatization, nor does he consider the actual efficacy of the petitionary treatment. He does not consider the implications of the religious categorization that attributes infertility to God. Rather, he outlines the options available to infertile women in ancient Israel.

3.1.2 Infertility as a Culturally-Mandated Disability: The Interpretation of Jeremy Schipper

Building on the hypothesis laid out by Avalos, Jeremy Schipper offers a detailed analysis of Hannah’s infertility. He describes her childlessness as a disability in the historical context of ancient Israel. His interpretation emphasizes that culture defines disabilities. One of the disabilities Schipper discusses is infertility. Schipper’s interpretation uses the religious category of infertility to classify this phenomenon. He maintains that Israelite culture assumed that Hannah’s childlessness was the result of God’s action. Thus, he highlights both the cultural

⁷ Ibid., 328.

⁸ Ibid. See also Schipper, “Disabling Israelite Leadership,” 109.

⁹ Ibid., 331.

pressure placed on Hannah to reproduce, as well as the religious category that identifies God as the cause of her infertility.

Schipper's reading follows two steps. First, he emphasizes the close relationship between cultural norms and the depiction of infertility as a disability. He outlines the complex relationship between the representation of childlessness in biblical literature and the contemporary understanding of infertility: "Deciding what counts as disability remains difficult enough in some contemporary literature, but even more so when the text comes from a very different time and culture."¹⁰ To address what qualifies as a disability in ancient Israel, Schipper offers an alternative description of disability related to cultural expectations. He maintains that Hannah's childlessness is more "a social experience than a biological anomaly."¹¹ Schipper illustrates this point by stressing Peninnah's provocations. He proposes that the social dynamic between the two women causes Hannah's distress. Further, he notes that "the passage describes [Hannah's] experience of infertility and not the cause of her infertility."¹² By shifting to the cultural experience of childlessness, Schipper reframes the medical understanding of infertility as a disability to a culturally defined problem in ancient Israel. He postulates that social pressures relate to the cultural expectation that required women to reproduce. Rather than a medical diagnosis, infertility as a cultural expectation to reproduce, determines Hannah's status as a disabled woman.

Second, Schipper relates this cultural experience to the religious category of infertility. He reports that Peninnah, Elkanah, and even Hannah deduce that her childlessness is the result of God's inaction.¹³ The religious category, in turn, contributes to the social pressure placed on

¹⁰ Schipper, *Disability & Isaiah's Suffering Servant*, 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 22.

Hannah to produce a child. Further, this burden increases exponentially the longer Hannah remains infertile. The Israelite community “induce[s] her divinely caused infertility from the amount of time that passed without conception.”¹⁴ By underscoring the lengthiness of Hannah’s involuntary childlessness, Schipper reframes the religious category. He stresses that this theological argument requires time. The stigma of Hannah’s infertility is “determined by social expectations for a person of a particular age.”¹⁵ Still, Schipper affirms the religious category. He notes that “the text provides a theological reason for her condition, namely that the LORD closed her womb.”¹⁶

In sum, Schipper’s analysis establishes the cultural pressure to reproduce in the historical context of ancient Israel. His interpretation also uses the religious category of infertility to show that Hannah experiences social marginalization. Her age and status as a childless woman reinforce this religious stigmatization. Thus, to Schipper, Hannah’s involuntary childlessness is secondary to her inability to fulfill the cultural expectation of normative womanhood. He redefines the religious category to include age, but he does not question the legitimacy of its theological argument. Instead, his interpretation emphasizes the historical reconstruction of infertility as a disability in ancient Israel.

3.1.3 Normalizing Hannah’s Infertility: The Interpretation of Joel S. Baden

Joel S. Baden’s interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 reverses the religious category of infertility. It suggests that childlessness is a natural state in ancient Israel. His proposal rejects the religious argument that infertility is the result of God’s punishment. Instead, Baden normalizes the experience of childlessness. He argues that infertility is normative, and fertility is not. In other

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

words, he rejects the religious category in his interpretation and uses the economic category to describe Hannah's infertility as a disability. His interpretation was published in 2015 and thus illustrates a new move in disability biblical scholarship. It rejects the religious category as a valid explanation for involuntary childlessness.

Baden's reading of Hannah's story makes three main arguments. First, he upends the religious category, presenting involuntary childlessness as normative and challenging the link between infertility and God's punishment. He directly repudiates this category and postulates that infertility cannot be defined as a theologically based impairment. He asserts:

If disability is defined as a deviation from a culturally defined normative state, as a social construction rather than any objective reality, then to classify infertility as a disability requires that its opposite, fertility, be understood as normal.¹⁷

Baden counters Schipper's claim that infertility is a cultural stigma. Instead, Baden shows that fertility is not normative. He provides a counterproposal. In ancient Israel, infertility was a normal state for the majority of women. According to this hypothesis, fertility is the social elevation from a normative non-reproductive position. Baden thus turns the binary between fertility and infertility on its head. He rejects the link between fecundity and God's blessing because not every woman "is blessed or cursed.... Blessing and curse may be antonyms, but they are not exclusive options."¹⁸

Second, Baden directly challenges the religious category of infertility that attributes childlessness to God's anger. He accuses disability scholars of not taking "this nuance into account" when they "view barrenness [*sic*] as divine punishment."¹⁹ Thus, his interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 rejects the idea that Hannah's infertility results from a "hidden sin."²⁰ Further, he

¹⁷ Baden, "The Nature of Barrenness in the Hebrew Bible," 20.

¹⁸ Baden, "Be Fruitful and Multiply," 8.

¹⁹ Baden, "The Nature of Barrenness in the Hebrew Bible," 20.

²⁰ Baden, "The Matriarchs as Models," 48.

suggests that Hannah's prayer "is not a prayer of repentance. It is not a confession of wrongdoing... Rather, she feels as if she has been punished for doing nothing at all."²¹ Baden recommends readers view fertility as a sign of God's agency that is not related to the dynamic of sin and punishment. He writes:

We are dealing not with infertility (or sickness, or famine, or death) as divine punishment presented in either explicit or implicit fashion, but with two phenomena—divine intervention and mere happenstance—presented in the form of infertility.²²

Baden submits that fertility occurs both naturally and through God's intervention. In Hannah's story, he claims that God is passive, "neglecting to open the womb in the first place."²³ Hannah's prayer therefore calls God to action. It conveys her request for divine intervention.

Third, Baden offers the economic model of infertility as an alternative to interpreting Hannah's childlessness as a disability. He proposes that infertility is an economic issue. He explains:

The very historical circumstances of Israel's emergence in the early Iron Age contributed to a cultural emphasis on offspring... For Israel, a newcomer in the Canaanite context, demographic expansion was important in its own right: families and clans required a certain population to gain an economic foothold, to ensure the proper transmission of inherited property, and to provide for a measure of self-defense if necessary.²⁴

Using the economic category, Baden justifies the cultural demand for women to reproduce in ancient Israel. He recontextualizes the explanation of Hannah's disability, moving the problem of her childlessness from the religious to the economic context. Baden states that "from the perspective of a parent, children were a safety net, as they often are today. The elderly would be supported by their offspring: housed in their children's homes, fed from their children's food."²⁵

²¹ Ibid., 48-49.

²² Ibid., 50.

²³ Ibid., 58.

²⁴ Ibid., 27-28.

²⁵ Ibid., 28.

In short, Baden does not reject the description of infertility as a disability. Rather, he establishes that this disability is an economic issue.

In sum, Baden's analysis of Hannah's infertility leads to some surprising conclusions. He rejects the religious category of infertility, showing that Hannah's childlessness is not related to theological punishment. He thus removes the religious stigma of Hannah's involuntary childlessness and replaces it with an economic understanding of the discrimination of infertility. Baden supports the economic category by appealing to the need for labor, patrilineal legacy, and self-defense. Hannah must have children to protect the economic future of her community. Baden thus critiques Hannah's religious stigmatization but not her economic marginalization. Giving a historical reason for her discrimination, he links it to the economic concerns of her family and community.

3.2 Feminist “Depatriarchalizing” Interpretations of Infertility: Hannah as a Childless Woman

The second hermeneutical approach highlights depatriarchalizing interpretations of Hannah's infertility. Feminist scholars of this approach discuss “varied and diverse biblical passages which break with patriarchy.”²⁶ They examine Hannah's efforts to conceive and suggest that the story speaks to an authentic female experience. Some stress Hannah's agency. They propose that her actions show Israelite women's desire to reproduce. Others offer an historical reconstruction of the text. They argue that Hannah's childlessness uncovers the authentic experience of infertility in ancient Israel. The following analysis explores the

²⁶ Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, no. 1 (1973): 48.

interpretations by Phyllis Trible, Mary Callaway, and Jo Ann Hackett.²⁷ Their readings are in chronological order and range from 1979 to 2012.

3.2.1 *God's Compassion Toward Infertile Women: The Interpretation of Phyllis Trible*

Phyllis Trible's interpretation examines the "journey" of the term רחם or "womb" in biblical literature. Her exposition includes an evaluation of 1 Samuel 1. She views Hannah's infertility as part of the transition from the embodied concept of women's wombs to God's compassion, but her discussion of Hannah's childlessness is not central to the chapter. Rather, she is primarily concerned with uncovering "diverse traditions in the Old Testament about male and female that reflect... the image of God."²⁸ She explains how bodily wombs transform into a feminine image often associated with God. However, her interpretation of Hannah's story is central to the linguistic move in biblical Hebrew from women's wombs to God's kindness.

Trible's chapter, "Journey of a Metaphor" takes up the subject of Hannah's infertility in two parts. First, Trible offers multiple translations of the term רחם, culminating in the expression of God's compassion. She recognizes that biblical narratives generally use this term to describe a woman's womb. It is a concrete term, a "physical organ of the female body."²⁹ Trible then notes that the term expands, in its plural form, to include compassion and love. As she observes:

The Hebrew noun *rah^amim* connotes simultaneously both a mode of being and the locus of that mode. In its singular form the noun *reḥem* means "womb" or "uterus." In the plural, *rah^amim*, this concrete meaning expands to the abstraction of compassion, mercy, and love.³⁰

²⁷ Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978); Mary Callaway, *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979); Callaway's work is a revised version of her dissertation that was published as part of the Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation series, See, Mary Callaway, "Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1979); Jo Ann Hackett, "1 and 2 Samuel," in *Women's Bible Commentary: Twentieth-Anniversary Edition Revised and Updated*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012).

²⁸ Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 22-23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Trible thus presents רחם as both a biological organ and a metaphor. She inextricably links the physical function of a pregnant womb, which produces and protects life, with the biblical metaphor of compassion.³¹ Further, her evaluation of this term leads to the conceptualization of God as feminine. The term underscores the semantic movement from “the wombs of women to the compassion of God.”³² Tribble thus proposes that the journey of this particular metaphor speaks to an underlying portrayal of “Yahweh the mother.”³³ God’s compassion, which is intrinsically related to a female bodily organ, reveals feminine characteristics of the divine.

Second, Tribble proposes that God’s compassion directly shapes Hannah’s infertile status. She claims that the metaphor speaks to God’s role in the reproductive process. Specifically, Tribble contends that Hannah’s womb “is a physical object upon which the deity acts.... Only God closes and opens wombs in judgement, in blessing, and in mystery.”³⁴ In other words, Tribble uses the religious category to highlight God’s “mysterious” control over female reproduction. Her interpretation moves from a biological to a religious analysis. For instance, she argues:

God conceives in the womb; God fashions in the womb; God judges in the womb; God destines in the womb; God brings forth from the womb; God receives out of the womb.... Accordingly, in biblical traditions an organ unique to the female becomes a vehicle pointing to the compassion of God.³⁵

To Tribble, God’s influence over Hannah’s childlessness is a matter of compassion. She argues that infertility is not about God’s anger. She stresses that God’s kindness, as opposed to the kindness of Hannah’s husband, resolves her involuntary childlessness.³⁶ God shows Hannah the compassion she deserves, by opening her womb and facilitating the conception of her child.

³¹ Tribble does recognize that “men also participate in the journey of this biblical metaphor.” Nevertheless, Tribble emphasizes the unique female qualities of this term in her interpretation. *Ibid.*, 33-34.

³² *Ibid.*, 34.

³³ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁶ As she puts it: “Not even the assurances of... Elkanah can erase the sadness of her heart.” *Ibid.*

In sum, Tribble's examination of רחם as a metaphor exemplifies the power imparted to female reproduction in biblical narratives. She rightly suggests that compassion expands on the Hebrew term normally attributed to the uterus. Further, she reinterprets the religious category of infertility, arguing that God's power over reproduction is a matter of kindness. Still, her description of divine femininity relies on an image of normative biological reproduction. For Tribble, infertility is not as important as its opposite, fertility. She relies on this term to conceptualize God's compassion. In turn, her chapter reinforces the religious category of infertility. While Tribble does not view God as angry, she presents childlessness as a problem corrected only through God's action.

3.2.2 Infertility as the Communal Suffering of Israel: The Interpretation of Mary Callaway

Mary Callaway examines 1 Samuel 1 as part of a linear tradition of infertility texts in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. She explores how the infertility tradition "functions in different contexts," and she demonstrates "the relation between the formation of the Scriptures and the later interpretation of them."³⁷ Her analysis of the infertility tradition thus explores the formation of these texts and their interpretation. Callaway views Hannah's infertility as an important religious symbol that is part of this reception history. She explains:

The tradition of the barren [*sic*] matriarchs provide a feminine image in a religious context for which such imagery was rare. The tradition becomes more and more important in the Second Temple period and it appears to be cumulative.³⁸

Callaway points out the longevity of the feminine image of the infertile matriarch. Highlighting the adaptability of the tradition of infertility, she explains that the struggle with involuntary childlessness speaks to numerous historical contexts.³⁹ Hannah's story marks the transition from

³⁷ Callaway, *Sing, O Barren One*, 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁹ For instance, Callaway notes that this tradition "speaks to many different contexts in the Second Temple period." *Ibid.*, 3.

the infertile matriarchs of Genesis to the Second Temple period. Her childlessness becomes a symbol for Israel's suffering. In short, Callaway's interpretation is a reception history of biblical infertility that focuses on the influence of this feminine tradition from the book of Genesis through the Second Temple period. She presents her work as a midrash that identifies the shifting importance of this feminine tradition in the biblical corpus.

Two points are central to Callaway's interpretation. She first discusses how Hannah's childlessness in 1 Samuel 1 shapes the religious image of infertility. Callaway focuses on the transformation of the feminine tradition and attributes the unique features of Hannah's narrative to the Deuteronomistic Historian. She suggests:

The birth narrative represents a late stage in the history of the Samuel tradition. It was composed after the problems of the monarchy had become apparent, and the life of the last judge had been idealized. It reflects the interests and style of the Dt. historian, although it is not possible to say when it became part of the Deuteronomic history.⁴⁰

Callaway thus views Hannah's story as an idealized retelling of the prophet Samuel's birth. This narrative provides a "reinterpretation of early traditions... [that redacts] ancient Israelite tales of a favorite hero into a unified saga with an explicit theological focus."⁴¹ The religious convictions of the Deuteronomistic editor are of paramount importance to the transformation of the tradition of Hannah's infertility. The narrative moves from individual childlessness in Genesis to a commentary on the communal suffering of Israel in post-exilic texts. To ascertain these convictions, Callaway lists five features that are unique to Hannah's character. They "exhibit a strikingly different artistic style from the matriarchs in Genesis."⁴² According to Callaway, the

⁴⁰ Ibid., 38.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 41. They are: (1) Hannah's desire for offspring is overtly stated by the woman herself; (2) unlike the matriarch in Genesis, Hannah's social position is not influenced by her child; (3) Hannah does not attempt to circumvent the divine plan; (4) Hannah offers a vow directly to God; and (5) after the birth of her child, Hannah fulfills the obligation of her vow. Ibid., 41-42.

most important features are Hannah's prayer and her vow to God. These characteristics speak to the theological beliefs of the Deuteronomistic Historian, as Hannah remains "faithful and pious" despite her infertility.⁴³ They also recall the religious category of infertility that describes faithfulness as God's reward. Thus, in Callaway's reading, the Deuteronomistic historian reframes the infertility tradition to include retributive theology. She hypothesizes that the text represents the religious transformation of the feminine tradition as it develops from Genesis to the Second Temple period.

Second, Callaway contends that Hannah's story of childlessness is the bridge between the matriarchs of Genesis and the communal suffering of Israel during the Babylonian exile. Her efforts to conceive represent Israel's hope for reconciliation and return to the promised land. To support her hypothesis, Callaway references Hannah's petition: "This is not a historical account of the birth of Samuel... it is rather a story resignified for Israel in persecution, a story of the faithful remnant who put their trust in Yahweh and are finally vindicated."⁴⁴ Put another way, Hannah's efforts to conceive embody the hope for reconciliation between God and Israel. She suffers, prays for a child, and is rewarded for her faith. Likewise, the Deuteronomistic historian proposes that faithful Israel will be delivered from bondage and return to their homeland. In short, Callaway projects Hannah's piety, a unique feature of this story, onto the Israelite community. She presents Hannah as a symbol, writing: "Hannah functions not primarily as a mother but as one who has been rescued by Yahweh.... [She] is more truly the mother of Israel."⁴⁵ Hannah's infertility, therefore, is secondary to her symbolic importance. Her

⁴³ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 57.

involuntary childlessness is a symbol for God's power to rescue the people of Israel and return them to Jerusalem.

In sum, Callaway's exegesis on 1 Samuel 1 shows how the feminine tradition of infertility operates in the context of the Deuteronomistic History. She highlights that Hannah's childlessness transforms the importance of this tradition as it moves from an individualized notion of suffering to the pain of the Israelite community. Her interpretation also gives prominence to the religious category of infertility. It stresses both Hannah's and Israel's piety, and it uses the religious category to show how Hannah and Israel are rewarded for their continual faithfulness. Callaway's reading views the religious category positively, suggesting that it puts Hannah in a positive light. However, her reading downplays a critique of the retributive framework. Callaway does not describe the experience of infertility in the Deuteronomistic tradition. Her interpretation focuses on the shifting importance of the tradition of infertility. It highlights Hannah's transformation from the suffering of an infertile woman to the collective suffering and displacement of exiled Israel.

3.2.3 Historical Reconstruction of Female Infertility: The Interpretation of Jo Ann Hackett

Jo Ann Hackett incorporates both the economic and the religious categories into her commentary on 1 Samuel 1. Hackett's interpretation highlights the central role female figures play in the text. She notes:

There are stories about royal women involved in events that had major political repercussions throughout Israel, but there are also narratives in which nonroyal women play a significant role: Hannah, the medium at Endor, and the two 'wise women' from Israel's villages.⁴⁶

To Hackett, biblical narratives offer a direct account of women's lives. Some stories depict major political issues. Others, describing ordinary experiences, offer a "surprising amount of incidental

⁴⁶ Hackett, "1 and 2 Samuel," 150.

information about women's lives."⁴⁷ Hackett investigates Hannah's childlessness as one of those ordinary experiences. She uses the economic category to describe the pressure placed on Hannah to reproduce. She also employs the religious category, arguing that Hannah's infertility must be understood as a punishment by God. In short, Hackett claims that Hannah's involuntary childlessness speaks to the common experience of infertility in ancient Israel. Her interpretation of this text explores the economic and religious dimensions of biblical infertility.

Hackett's commentary on 1 Samuel 1 follows two steps. First, she employs the economic category to describe the pressure to reproduce in ancient Israel. She argues that in this narrative "a woman's prestige was based at least partially on her demonstrated ability to produce offspring."⁴⁸ Social status relates directly to women's fecundity. Women's ability to have children offers financial and social security. Thus, as an infertile wife, Hannah lives a socially-dubious existence. Through marriage, Hannah gains immediate protection. Hackett states: "Hannah [is] part of Elkanah's family and the responsibility of the men in the family."⁴⁹ Yet, the death of Hannah's husband would be devastating. If Hannah does not have "children (particularly sons), she would have become kinless, a fringe member of society... she would have only a life of extreme poverty to look forward to."⁵⁰ Immediate protection is not the same as long-term security. Using the economic category of infertility, Hackett describes the social pressures that push Hannah to have children of her own. To Hackett the economics of fertility are a cultural reality and an unchangeable fact of women's lives in ancient Israel.

Second, Hackett addresses the religious category of infertility. She contends that the connection between childlessness and God's anger must be understood within the historical

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

context of the text, observing: “To the narrator, and presumably his audience, childlessness was not understood as a physical phenomenon, but as a decision of God—and indeed, in some instances as a punishment from God.”⁵¹ Here, Hackett stresses the theological reason for the discrimination of Hannah’s infertility. She presents the retributive theological framework as an accepted tradition and places it in the mind of the characters and narrator of this story. Hackett even suggests that Hannah accepts the religious category, remarking that Hannah’s vow “seems to agree with this understanding [that] only YHWH can give her children.”⁵² Notably, Hackett does not critique the religious category. She establishes the legitimacy of this theological argument in ancient Israel. Even so, Hackett does differentiate between the religious category and our contemporary understanding of infertility. She separates the worldview of the Deuteronomistic Historian from the readers of her exegesis. In this sense, Hackett does not accept the religious category of infertility as a present-day reality. She historicizes the category and establishes it as the predominant view in ancient Israel.

In sum, Hackett’s interpretation of Hannah’s infertility incorporates both the economic and religious categories. She utilizes the economic category to describe Hannah’s desire to produce a child, highlighting how children offer financial protection to their mothers in old age. Hackett also affirms the religious category. She shows how the retributive theological framework operates in the text. Both categories are useful to Hackett’s historiographic reconstruction of ancient Israel. She offers an interpretation of infertility that articulates the issues of Hannah’s childlessness. Even so, Hackett’s interpretation does not directly critique these categories. Her assessment of the experience of infertility is pushed to the background in favor of an historical-critical reconstruction.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

3.3 Feminist “Rejectionist” Interpretations of Infertility: Hannah as a Patriarchal Tool

The third hermeneutical approach addresses rejectionist interpretations of Hannah’s childlessness. These feminist scholars challenge the economic and religious categories of infertility. They contend that biblical texts are the product of androcentric ideology. Esther Fuchs expresses this view well, arguing:

The assumption that we should be capable of discovering an authentic feminine voice... should itself be subject to a hermeneutics of suspicion. Patriarchal attitudes toward women, whether ancient or modern, are integral to our histories and lives. They do not only explain how men treated women, but also to what extent that women accepted this treatment.⁵³

Accordingly, rejectionist interpretations of 1 Samuel 1 critique Hannah’s acquiescence to patriarchal society. Some view Hannah as a tool of a patriarchal agenda. Others propose that she adheres to the patriarchal standard of womanhood. Therefore, this framework rejects Hannah’s story as the projection of a patriarchal author. The following analysis investigates the interpretations offered by J Cheryl Exum, Danna Nolan Fewell, David M. Gunn, and Esther Fuchs in the order of their publication.⁵⁴ The three readings range from 1985 to 2003.

3.3.1 *The Paradox of Infertility in Biblical Literature: The Interpretation of J. Cheryl Exum*

J. Cheryl Exum’s analysis critiques the economic category that leads to the stigmatization of Hannah’s infertility. She views Hannah’s childlessness as a paradox. Exum wants to affirm Hannah’s unique perspective but perceives this mother to be a product of patriarchal ideology. Consequently, her exegesis shifts from a depatriarchalizing to a rejectionist strategy. In “Mother in Israel,” she maintains that reproduction was essential to Hannah’s survival. Yet, in

⁵³ Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 23.

⁵⁴ J. Cheryl Exum, “‘Mother in Israel’: A Familiar Figure Reconsidered,” in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985); J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, & Promise: The Subject of the Bible’s First Story* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993); Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*.

Fragmented Women, Exum rejects her earlier assertion and affirms that the production of male children serves the economic interests of the biblical patriarchs.

The change in Exum's interpretation follows two steps. Her first work, "Mother in Israel," takes up narratives of biblical infertility using the economic category. Exum describes women's struggle to survive in patriarchal society. She presents childlessness as an existential "threat that the needed son might not appear.... To be childless in a patriarchal society represents a loss of status."⁵⁵ In other words, biblical women economically depend on children for their survival in patriarchal society. Hannah's infertility is a threat to her very existence. She needs to have children to ensure her place in the community. However, Exum also identifies the economic limitations placed on the infertile matriarchs. She contends: "Bearing sons is of utmost importance, and the matriarchs' major accomplishments are for the sake of their sons."⁵⁶ Thus, Exum views motherhood as a "paradox: though frequently ignored in the larger story of Israel's journey toward the promise, the matriarchs act at strategic points that move the plot, and thus the promise in the proper direction toward its fulfillment."⁵⁷ She laments that characters such as Hannah are often overlooked, even absent, in biblical narratives until they are needed to continue the family line. In short, Exum describes 1 Samuel 1 as a personal struggle within the patriarchal system. With Hannah's economic security obtained, she disappears from the narrative.

Exum's second work, *Fragmented Women*, employs the economic category of infertility in a very different way. She suggests that Hannah's childlessness speaks to the concerns of patriarchal society. Her reading follows a rejectionist strategy. Exum clearly states: "I begin with the assumption that the biblical literature was produced by and for an androcentric community. I

⁵⁵ Exum, "Mother in Israel," 76.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

understand women in biblical literature as male constructs.”⁵⁸ Using this approach, Exum refines her previous argument. She claims that Hannah’s childlessness is the product of patriarchal ideology. She also asserts that the issue of involuntary childlessness speaks to the concerns of a male author rather than the female experience of infertility. She asserts: “It is in the interest of patriarchal ideology not only that women bear children but also that they desire to do so.”⁵⁹ 1 Samuel 1 reflects this ideology. Hannah wants to have children. She thus perpetuates the patriarchal system. Simply put, Hannah’s efforts to conceive “share in the androcentric world-view” that values women based on their ability to contribute to the economic welfare of society through the production of children, mainly sons.⁶⁰

In sum, Exum’s interpretation of the economic importance of infertility in 1 Samuel 1 outlines the complexities of rejectionist and depatriarchalizing feminist strategies. She recognizes that Hannah represents the patriarchal ideal of the reproductive mother. Hannah strives to have children to the economic benefit of her husband. Yet, Exum also maintains that “the submerged strains of women’s voices” are seen and felt in the struggle with infertility.⁶¹ She employs the economic category to describe women’s struggle for economic survival and contends that it “uncover[s] evidence of patriarchy’s uneasiness and guilt with regard to its treatment of women.”⁶² Still, Exum does not read these narratives from the experience of infertility. Her rejection of 1 Samuel 1 as a product of patriarchal ideology does not allow for a contextual reading. She stresses the stigmatization of childless individuals but does not side with them in their reproductive efforts. So Exum’s examination of the economic issue of infertility do

⁵⁸ Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 11.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

not move beyond a wholesale rejection. She does not explore how these economic factors shape the discrimination of childlessness and Hannah's experience of infertility.

3.3.2 *Possession of Hannah: The Interpretation of Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn*

Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn's interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 critiques both the economic and religious categories of infertility. Their work explores the "textually encoded ideology" of Hannah's childlessness.⁶³ Fewell and Gunn discuss Hannah's story in their chapter "Possessed and Dispossessed." These exegetes identify this narrative as part of a long chain that depicts the control and abuse of female bodies in the Judges cycle. As part of this larger narrative, Fewell and Gunn frame Hannah's infertility, and for that matter Peninnah's children, as the "possession" of their husband Elkanah. They focus on how the control of female bodies rely on the economic and religious categories of infertility.

Fewell and Gunn's interpretation of Hannah's involuntary childlessness follows two steps. First, they emphasize the economic advantages reproduction provides for biblical patriarchs. They show that the birth of children in this story benefit Elkanah as opposed to Hannah or Peninnah. They posit: "For Elkanah the marriage to two women is most likely a sign of great prestige."⁶⁴ The narrative conveys Elkanah's high status by showing that he can support not one but two wives. Further, Elkanah's bigamous marriage turns Hannah and Peninnah into commodities since "it was clear to the both of them from the beginning that they were partial and replaceable."⁶⁵ Thus, Fewell and Gunn present polygamous marriage as one "of male convenience."⁶⁶ They critique the economic category of infertility and note that it leads to

⁶³ See, Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, & Promise*, 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Elkanah's possession of his wives. Hannah and Peninnah struggle for economic status within the family, while Elkanah reaps the rewards of marriage to two women.⁶⁷

Second, Fewell and Gunn challenge the religious category of biblical infertility. They contend that Hannah's petition and sacrifice of her son follow patriarchal ideology. In their interpretation, Fewell and Gunn directly criticize Hannah's prayer, asking:

What sort of god does Hannah have faith in? A god who only gives when he [*sic*] gets something in return? A god who requires a mother to give up her child in order to live up to society's conditions of value? And what about Hannah's view of herself? What compels her to negotiate with this 'God of armies?'⁶⁸

Thus, they challenge commentators "eager to speak of Hannah's faith."⁶⁹ Rather than emphasize Hannah's faithfulness, Fewell and Gunn stress her sacrifice. Offering an intertextual comparison between 1 Samuel 1 and Judges 12, they wonder whether Hannah is any better than Jephthah. After all, she is willing to sacrifice her child for higher social status. To Fewell and Gunn, the religious category is indefensible and the characters who follow this ideology are deplorable. Hannah's willingness to give away her child to secure a place in patriarchal society represents a broken theological-ethical system.

In sum, Fewell and Gunn strongly critique the economic category of Hannah's infertility. They view Hannah as the possession of her husband. Elkanah's prestige is based on his marriage to two wives. Further, they dismiss the religious category, noting that her sacrifice is ethically

⁶⁷ To their credit, Fewell and Gunn present Elkanah as a complicated figure, recognizing that: "Elkanah says what every woman needs to hear at least once in her life, namely, that she does not have to be a mother to be a person of worth." But they also show that "Elkanah firmly ensconces himself as the center of Hannah's world." *Ibid.*, 137. Janice P. De-Whyte, reading from an Akan perspective, offers a similar interpretation of Elkanah's attitude toward Hannah: "Elkanah's speech is indicative of the lack of comprehension that men in traditional societies may sometimes have in regards to the complete implications of women's socialisation. Any Akan woman will likely say 'no, no you cannot be more to me than ten sons because if I don't have children ma se ashe.'" See, Janice P. De-Whyte, *Wom(b)an: A Cultural-Narrative Reading of the Hebrew Bible Barrenness Narratives* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2018), 150-151.

⁶⁸ Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, & Promise*, 138.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

questionable. Hannah's "desire for a child becomes strategic for the ongoing story of Israel's political heroes. A mother sacrificing for the sake of the monarchy... in the service of those men, who, literally speaking, have more power and promise."⁷⁰ Thus, Hannah is a tragic figure. She is a joke, a tool of patriarchy that requires her fertility and uses her child for its own ends. Fewell and Gunn's interpretation establishes the role patriarchy plays in the reproductive process. However, because these scholars do not read with those struggling with infertility, they fail to provide a nuanced critique of this form of social discrimination. Put another way, Fewell and Gunn challenge the economic and religious categories of infertility but frame those who seek to resolve this condition as either fools or complicit with their oppressors.

3.3.3 Hannah as an "Ideal" Mother in Patriarchal Society: The Interpretation of Esther Fuchs

Esther Fuchs challenges both the economic and religious categories in her investigation of Hannah's infertility. She proposes that 1 Samuel 1 is the product of a male author, who attributes reproductive power to a male deity for the advancement of the biblical patriarchs. She also contends that this text presents Hannah as a model for women, serving the interests of patriarchal society. Fuchs uses the economic category to link biblical childlessness to patrilineal legacy. She then turns to the patriarchal ideal of motherhood and critiques the religious category which identifies Hannah as a moral exemplar in her efforts to conceive.

Fuchs's interpretation has two parts. In the first part, she critiques the economic category of infertility and emphasizes that the presentation of childlessness in 1 Samuel 1 stresses patriarchal concerns regarding economic survival and patrilineal legacy. She outlines the economic impact of involuntary childlessness and asserts that patriarchy "has little to gain from a total negation of women. It has much more to gain from valorizing the contribution of mothers to

⁷⁰ Ibid.

the patriarchal system.”⁷¹ Women’s “contribution” in this system is, of course, the production of human bodies. In 1 Samuel 1, Hannah’s and Peninnah’s reproductive capabilities provide for the continuity of the patrilineal line. Or, as Fuchs states: “Mother figures... are valorized as male-controlled wives or widows successfully warding off the threat of patrilineal disruption.”⁷²

Patriarchal society gains a direct economic advantage by supporting fertile mothers. Encouraging women to reproduce maintains the status-quo and protects the interests of the patriarchs. In short, women sustain patriarchal society. Thus, infertile women are a disruption to the patriarchal system. Childlessness is a problem, not for women, but rather the society that requires them to reproduce.

In the second part, Fuchs proposes that Hannah’s faith falls under the religious category of infertility. She asserts that this story describes the patriarchal attribution of reproductive power to the father and, ultimately, a masculine deity. To address this category, Fuchs discusses how Hannah is a “morally impressive figure.”⁷³ She exemplifies the patriarchal ideal of the woman as mother. The narrative lauds Hannah as a morally impressive woman whose prayer helps her achieve her goal of fertility. Fuchs recognizes that “by interpreting a woman’s procreativity as a divine reward, the annunciation type-scene implies that barrenness [*sic*] is a kind of divine retribution, or an expression of moral deficiency.”⁷⁴ As a moral exemplar, Hannah’s fertility implies the inadequacy of other infertile women. Fuchs decisively rejects the religious category but not because of the stigmatization of infertility. Rather, she critiques the attribution of miraculous fertility to a male deity. She argues: “By focusing on the faithfulness of infertile women, the patriarchal text implies that male progeny belongs ultimately to [YHWH], but for all

⁷¹ Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*, 47.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

practical purposes to the father.”⁷⁵ Therefore, Fuchs criticizes 1 Samuel 1 precisely because it displaces women’s individual choice and places power in the hands of the patriarchs and a male God. She rejects the religious category as a tool that “justifies and validates the patriarchal indictment of childless women.”⁷⁶

In sum, Fuchs’s analysis provides a stark critique of the economic and religious categories that reinforce the stigmatization of infertility. Her interpretation challenges how patriarchal society controls women’s reproductive rights using economic pressure. Further, she undermines the religious category, noting that it attributes fertility to a masculine deity. Still, Fuchs does not read from the perspective of those who experience infertility. Her exegesis divides these individuals into two categories: those who are stigmatized due to their continued infertility and those who buy into a patriarchal system by having children. This approach speaks to the need for a third perspective that both criticizes the pronatalist power structures that require female reproduction and recognizes the experience of women who try to reproduce.

3.4 Feminist-Disability Studies and the Hermeneutic of Reproduction: A Conclusion

The readings analyzed in this chapter illustrate three hermeneutical approaches for discussing Hannah’s infertility. The first approach emphasizes Hannah’s infertility as a disability. Disability scholars use the economic and religious categories to offer a historical reconstruction of childlessness. They outline how Hannah is marginalized as a disabled woman. However, their interpretations do not directly critique Hannah’s stigmatization. Instead, they focus on a historical analysis of infertility as a disability. The second approach features the depatriarchalizing strategy. It idealizes fertility as an important feminine characteristic. These feminist theorists critique the economic and religious categories that marginalize Hannah. Yet,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 64.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 49.

they also often laud her fertility. They stress the important contribution female fecundity has to Israelite society. The third approach is rejectionist and consists of feminist scholars who reject Hannah's story as part of a patriarchal agenda. These exegetes criticize infertile women for accepting patriarchal norms. They present Hannah as the product of an androcentric fantasy, informed by the economic and religious categories of infertility.

Disability and feminist interpretations of 1 Samuel 1 challenge the economic and religious categories of Hannah's infertility. In different ways, they each highlight Hannah's discrimination based on her gender or able-bodiedness. However, the readings addressed in this chapter do not ground their interpretations in the different experiences of infertility. They do not engage social-scientific models that center on the conceptualization and stigmatization of involuntary childlessness. Their analyses are limited to Hannah's gender or disabled status. These shortcomings point to the need for a hermeneutical approach that directly addresses these aspects of Hannah's infertility using social-scientific models. By highlighting social-scientific scholarship, a hermeneutic of reproduction thus challenges both the economic and religious categories of infertility and critiques the discrimination of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. The next chapter outlines the formation of social-scientific scholarship on infertility. It discusses four models used by these theorists that can be applied to a hermeneutic of reproduction.

4. Social-Scientific Models for the Study of Infertility

The preceding two chapters discuss historical, literary, disability, and feminist readings of 1 Samuel 1. Both chapters establish that these scholars do not directly address social-scientific models that analyze the conceptualization and stigmatization of infertility. They do not ground their work in the experience of childlessness. Therefore, this chapter gives an overview of four different models used by social scientists to study infertility. The four models fall under two broad categories: the conceptualization and the stigmatization categories. The conceptualization category includes the social constructionist and misfit models. They emphasize that the marginalization of infertility results from social or cultural influences. The social constructionist model argues that the discrimination of infertility is based on social arrangements and expectations. The misfit model frames childlessness as the difference between the infertile body and the sociocultural expectation of motherhood. The stigmatization category consists of the enacted and felt models. They examine the public and personal discrimination of childlessness. The enacted model underscores overt discrimination. It shows that many societies publicly stigmatize infertile women and, on occasion, men. The felt model examines discreditable or familial discrimination of childlessness. It highlights social expectations, the experience of role failure, and the disclosure of infertility to others. Together, the four models create an intricate understanding of involuntary childlessness. They stress the importance of both the conceptualization and stigmatization of infertility.

The four models addressed in this chapter have shaped the study of infertility in five ways. First, the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models provide a new entry point for understanding the conceptualization and stigmatization of involuntary childlessness. These models complexify the analysis of infertility and recognize that there are numerous types of discrimination of infertile women, men, and couples. Second, the models elaborate on the various conceptualizations of infertility as a disability. The social constructionist and misfit models challenge an essentialist understanding of childlessness framed by pronatalist ideology.¹ Third, the models account for the variations in the stigmatization of childlessness. The enacted and felt models critique the overt stigma of infertility and personal or familial pressure to reproduce. Fourth, the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models address how childlessness relates to both gender and disability. They interrogate multiaxial forms of power shaping the experience of infertility. Fifth, the four models have been used by feminist-disability scholars.² These models are a point of conversation between disability, feminist, and gender studies.

The chapter proceeds in two sections. The first section investigates the two models under the conceptualization category, the social constructionist and the misfit models. The section shows that feminist-disability scholars use these models to elaborate on the social and cultural

¹ Pronatalism refers to societies that strongly promote motherhood and childbirth. Often these communities create policies that encourage reproduction. Other times, they discriminate against individuals who do not reproduce, including those dealing with infertility. In antiquity, pronatalism refers to the stress placed on “the duties of marriage and procreation” by societies that required high birth rates to survive. It recognizes that pronatalist ideology stigmatizes “persons who failed to produce children [which] was incorporated into religious dogma and mythology.” See, Michael S. Teitelbaum, “Population: Biology and Anthropology,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/science/population-biology-and-anthropology> [accessed on February 25, 2019]. Antinatalism refers to societies that do not have policies promoting reproduction or discriminate against childless couples. Often these communities suffer from overpopulation or have population control measures in place such as access to birth control.

²² By feminist-disability scholars, I refer to researchers that address both disability and gender in their work on infertility. The term “feminist-disability” was first coined by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson in her 2002 essay “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory.”

influences defining infertility as a disability. The second section examines the models under the stigmatization category, the enacted and felt models. These models expand the understanding of involuntary childlessness. Scholars use these models to identify variations of the stigmatization of infertility, including familial, self-stigmatization, and the overt discrimination of infertility. The conclusion suggests that a biblical hermeneutic of reproduction ought to be based on the four social-scientific models of infertility.

4.1 The Conceptualization Category: The Social Constructionist and Misfit Models

Feminist and disability scholars in the social sciences have relied on the conceptualization category since the late 1970s to define infertility as a disability. As Frank von Balen and Marcia C. Inhorn note in their 2002 work: “The past twenty-five years have witnessed a veritable explosion of research on the social construction and cultural elaboration of women’s reproductive experiences.”³ The social constructionist and misfit models offer a blueprint for critiquing social expectations of fertility and cultural norms discriminating against childlessness. The research shows that infertility is “an [interruption] or [departure] from a standard script of human form, function, behavior, or perception that... we call normal.”⁴ To understand these developments, this section first examines the formation of the social constructionist model and how it has been adopted by feminist-disability scholars. Next, it outlines the important characteristics of the social constructionist model. This model establishes that society influences the experience of infertility. Finally, the section describes the misfit model which changes the evaluation of the cultural experience of infertility.

³ Frank von Balen and Marcia C. Inhorn, “Interpreting Infertility: A View from the Social Sciences,” in *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*, ed. Marcia C. Inhorn and Frank von Balen (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 3.

⁴ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “The Case for Conserving Disability,” *Bioethical Inquiry* 9 (2012): 342.

4.1.1 The Formation of the Social Constructionist Model: “Social Knowledge” to Disabilities

The social constructionist model predates research by feminist-disability scholars on infertility. Social constructionism was first posited in 1966 by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. They used this model to argue that social groups create systems of knowledge. Or, as they state:

Sociological interest in questions of “reality” and “knowledge” is... justified by the fact of their social relativity.... Specific agglomerations of “reality” and “knowledge” pertain to specific social contexts, and that these relationships will have to be included in an adequate sociological analysis of these contexts.⁵

Berger and Luckmann propose that sociological analyses must account for different cultural contexts. They maintain that “man [*sic*] is biologically predestined to construct and to inhabit a world with others. This world becomes for him [*sic*] the dominant and definitive reality.”⁶ In this sense, humanity creates reality, at least within the limits set by nature.⁷

Berger and Luckmann do not reference disabilities in their work. Even so, the social constructionist model took hold in disability discourse. By the mid-1970s, scholars and activists began to refer to disabilities as a social construct. For instance, the 1976 pamphlet on the *Fundamental Principles of Disability* states: “In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society.”⁸ By the 1980s, the social

⁵ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁷ Berger and Luckman argue: “Its limits are set by nature, but once constructed, this world acts back upon nature.” *Ibid.*

⁸ The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation and The Disability Alliance, *Fundamental Principles of Disability Being a summary of the discussion held on 22nd November 1975 and containing commentaries from each organization* (London: Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976), 3.

constructionist model expanded again to include analyses of gender and disability.⁹ Researchers used the social constructionist model to examine the intersecting concerns of disability studies and feminism. In her seminal work “Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability,” for example, Susan Wendell uses the social constructionist model to describe both gender and disability. She asserts that “[d]isability...[like gender] is socially constructed from biological reality.”¹⁰ Further, researchers employed this model to show that social constructs marginalized women and disabled individuals simultaneously. Again, Wendell notes:

When public and private worlds are split, women (and children) have often been relegated to the private, and so have the disabled, the sick, and the old.... Much of the experience of disability and illness goes underground, because there is no socially acceptable way of expressing it and having the physical and psychological experience acknowledged.¹¹

In short, scholars in the 1980s used the social constructionist model to affirm the common concerns of women and disabled people. Still, disagreements between disability and feminist scholars precluded the development of a unique feminist-disability social constructionist model.

The differences between feminist and disability scholarship was especially felt on the topic of human reproduction. Feminist researchers often supported the reproductive rights of women. Disability theorists, who fought the selective abortion of disabled fetuses, largely supported the rights of the unborn. Or, as Marsha Saxton puts it: “[T]he reproductive rights movement emphasizes the right to have an abortion; the disability rights movement, the right *not to have to have* an abortion.”¹² This disagreement underscored the challenges of forming a social

⁹ Susan Hannahford, *Living Outside Inside: A Disabled Woman's Experience. Towards a Social and Political Perspective* (San Francisco, CA: Bookpeople, 1985); Michelle Fine and Adrienne Asch, eds., *Women with Disabilities: Essays in Psychology, Culture, and Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988).

¹⁰ Susan Wendell, “Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability,” *Hypatia* 4 no. 2 (1989): 104.

¹¹ Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 40.

¹² Marsha Saxton, “Disability Rights and Selective Abortion,” in *Abortion Wars: A Half Century of Struggle, 1950-2000*, ed. Rickie Solinger (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 375. Emphasis in the original. For examples of these feminist and disability approaches to infertility see, Cynthia R. Daniels, *At Women's Expense:*

constructionist model that addressed women with disabilities. Those who identify with both groups continued to “struggle with... the oppressions of being a woman in male-dominated societies and the oppressions of being disabled in societies dominated by the able-bodied.”¹³

Their perspectives were compartmentalized and separated into competing social models.

The relegation of disabled women in academic conversations eventually led to the development of a social constructionist model grounded in feminist-disability discourse. It was prominently proposed by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson in her 2002 essay, “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory.”¹⁴ She asserts:

Disability studies can benefit from feminist theory, and feminist theory can benefit from disability studies. Both feminism and disability studies are comparatively and concurrent academic enterprises. Just as feminism has expanded the lexicon of what we imagine as womanly, has sought to understand and destigmatize what we call the subject position of woman, so has disability studies examined the identity of *disabled* in the service of integrating people with disabilities more fully into our society.... A feminist disability theory builds on the strengths of both.¹⁵

Garland-Thomson emphasizes that feminist and disability studies have much to learn from one another. In this sense, her argument copies Wendell. However, unlike Wendell, Garland-Thomson calls for an entirely new approach. She states: “In talking about feminist disability theory, I am not proposing yet another discrete feminism.... Considering disability shifts the

State Power and the Politics of Fetal Rights (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Michelle Fine and Adrienne Asch, “The Question of Disability: No Easy Answer for the Women’s Movement,” *Reproductive Rights National Network Newsletter* 4 (1982): 19-20; Marlene Freid, ed., *From Abortion to Reproductive Freedom: Transforming a Movement* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990); Ruth Hubbard, “Abortion and Disability: Who Should and Who Should Not Inhabit the World?,” in *The Disability Studies Reader: Second Edition*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006); Deborah Kaplan, “Prenatal Screening and Diagnosis: The Impact on Persons with Disabilities,” in *Women and Prenatal Testing: Facing the Challenges of Genetic Testing*, ed. Karen H. Rothenberg and Elizabeth J. Thompson (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1994); Lynn M. Morgan, and Meredith W. Michaels, eds., *Fetal Subjects, Feminist Positions* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Marsha Saxton, “Born and Unborn: The Implications of Reproductive Technologies for People with Disabilities,” in *Test-Tube Women: What Future for Motherhood?*, ed. Rita Arditti, Renate Klein, and Shelly Minden (Boston, MA: Pandora, 1984).

¹³ Wendell, “Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability,” 105.

¹⁴ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory,” *National Women’s Studies Association Journal* 14 no. 3 (2002): 1-30.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-3. Emphasis in the original.

conceptual framework to strengthen our understanding of how these multiple systems intertwine, redefine, and mutually constitute one another.”¹⁶ Put another way, Garland-Thomson uses the social constructionist model to create a new way to conceptualize women with disabilities. She counters medical and cultural norms, noting that the social constructionist and eventually the misfit models challenge the presentation of disabled bodies.¹⁷ She asserts that these models “offer a counter-logic to the overdetermined cultural mandates to comply with normal and beautiful.”¹⁸ They provide a way to critique the normalization of male and able-bodiedness simultaneously.

4.1.2 *The Social Constructionist Model: Infertility and Social Expectations*

The social constructionist model describes disabilities as a social construct. It shows that “*disability* is not a product of individual failings, but is socially created.”¹⁹ The social constructionist model outlines the social systems, characteristics, and situations that define women as disabled, including women who are infertile. Feminist-disability scholars use the social constructionist model to interrogate the systemic barriers leading to the discrimination of disabled women.²⁰ In her research, Garland-Thomson only nominally discusses infertility. She highlights involuntary childlessness to “acknowledge physical diversity” among disabled women and to emphasize “the multiplicity of women’s identities, histories, and bodies.”²¹ Other scholars have elaborated on her work. They take Garland-Thomson’s generalized analysis and focus on

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷ In “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory” Garland-Thomson uses the social constructionist model. Later, she coins the term “misfit” in “Misfits: A Feminist-Materialist Disability Concept.” For my detailed discussion see, Chapter 4 Section 4.1.3.

¹⁸ Garland-Thomson, “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory,” 14.

¹⁹ Upali Chakravarti, “A Gendered Perspective of Disability Studies,” in *Disability, Gender and the Trajectories of Power*, ed. Asha Hans (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015), 26. Emphasis in the original.

²⁰ For a history of this model see, Arthur L. Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant: Infertile Couples in Contemporary America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 27-50.

²¹ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Re-shaping, Re-thinking, Re-defining: Feminist Disability Studies* (Washington, DC: Center for Women Policy Studies, 2001), 16.

the conceptualization of infertility.²² In this sense, the social constructionist model has proven relatively popular. It highlights the importance of social expectations in the conceptualization of women as infertile or impotent.

Three major characteristics shape feminist-disability discourse on the social constructionist model. The first characteristic is social conditioning which enables scholars to reject the medical model of disability.²³ Social conditioning refers to how cultural and medical diagnoses influence the conceptualization of able-bodiedness. They shape how societies define disabilities. Feminist-disability researchers interrogate these social and medical influences. They argue that a disability is not a “static *condition* with psychological consequences, but... [a] socially conditioned *process*.”²⁴ They reject the medical model but incorporate diagnoses in their analysis of the social construction of disabilities, including infertility. For example, Garland-Thomson argues that disabled women are often maligned in medical discourse. She notes:

The medical commitment to healing, coupled with modernity’s faith in technology and interventions that control outcomes, has increasingly shifted toward an aggressive intent to fix, regulate, or eradicate ostensibly deviant bodies. Such a program of elimination has often been at the expense of creating a more accessible environment or providing better support services for people with disabilities.²⁵

Garland-Thomson does not reject medical procedures outright. Rather, she claims that they “encourage the cultural conviction that disability can be extirpated; inviting the belief that life

²² See, e.g., Sarah Franklin, “Deconstructing ‘Desperateness:’ The Social Construction of Infertility in Popular Representations of New Reproductive Technologies,” in *The New Reproductive Technologies*, ed. Maureen V. McNeil, Ian Varcoe, and Steven Yearley (London: Macmillan, 1990), 220-229; Katarina Wegar, “In Search of Bad Mothers: Social Constructions of Birth and Adoptive Mothers,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 20 (1997): 77-86; Gayle Letherby, “Other than Mother and Mothers as Others: The Experience of Motherhood and Non-Motherhood in Relation to ‘Infertility’ and ‘Involuntary Childlessness,’” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 22 (1999): 359-372; Liberty Elizabeth Walther Barnes, “Preconceived Notions: The Social Construction of Male Infertility” (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2011).

²³ This chapter does not elaborate on the medical model of disability. It shows that social-scientific scholars use the social constructionist model to critique the medical model. For more information on the medical model see, Marno Retief and Rantoa Letšosa, “Models of disability: A brief overview,” *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71, no. 1 (2018): 2-3.

²⁴ Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant*, 7.

²⁵ Garland-Thomson, “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory,” 14.

with a disability is intolerable.”²⁶ She shifts from medical to social discourse and redefines disabilities as a social construct, stating: “Disability oppression...emanates from prejudicial attitudes that are given form in the world through architectural barriers, exclusionary institutions and the unequal distribution and access to resources.”²⁷ Researchers writing on infertility likewise stress social conditioning. They reject the medical diagnosis that describes individuals who have not conceived or carried to term after one year as infertile.²⁸ Still, they propose that medical diagnoses play a significant role in the conceptualization of involuntary childlessness. As Arthur L. Greil notes, the “experience of infertility is shaped by the ideology and social structure of the society in which they live. It is influenced, among other things, by the nature of medical technology.”²⁹ These scholars critique the medical model and use medical diagnoses to show that infertility is an issue of systemic barriers and cultural expectations.

The second characteristic feminist-disability scholars emphasize is social role expectations. This characteristic addresses the conviction that cultural norms dictate how infertility is conceptualized and stigmatized. As Elizabeth Sternke and Kathleen Abrahamson posit: “A constructivist grounded theory approach assume[s] the emergence of multiple realities.... [T]he phenomenon of infertility could be interpreted in multiple ways from multiple vantage points.”³⁰ Put another way, each cultural context establishes different social roles.

Pronatalist and patriarchal communities, which emphasize women’s role as a mother, more

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept,” *Hypatia* 26 no. 3 (2011): 591.

²⁸ The U.S. Supreme court ruled in *Bragdon v. Abbott* (524 US 624) that the infertility is a “disability... that is ‘a physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of [an individual’s major life activities.’” Because of this ruling, infertility has been listed under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for women who have been unable to conceive after one year, following the medicalized diagnosis of infertility. See, *Bragdon v. Abbot et al.*, 107 F.3d 934, vacated and remanded. (1st Cir. 1998).

²⁹ Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant*, 7.

³⁰ Elizabeth A. Sternke and Kathleen Abrahamson, “Perception of Women with Infertility on Stigma and Disability,” *Sexuality and Disability* 33 (2015): 8.

strongly discriminate against infertility than contexts that offer alternative opportunities.

Accordingly, cultural norms dictate the conceptualization of infertility. As Gay Becker suggests:

Women and men who struggle with infertility confront cultural ideologies surrounding gender norms. They are seeking a fit between their life situations and the cultural ideologies to which they subscribe. Stymied by the implausibility of this task, they have been forced to work intensively with cultural dialogues in order to reconcile their experiences with cultural expectations.³¹

In short, cultural contexts influence social role expectations which in turn shape the discrimination of infertility. Social role expectations thus highlight that infertility is a disability in pronatalist societies. The characteristic shows how infertile women's role expectations leads directly to their marginalization. In this sense, social role expectations underscore that the stigmatization of infertility is culturally enforced. The conceptualization of infertility relies, in part, on the cultural importance placed on childbirth and motherhood.

The third characteristic feminist-disability scholars analyze in their research on infertility is stratified reproduction. The characteristic refers to the notion that infertility is stratified by class, race, gender, age, and geopolitical location. Put another way, stratified reproduction emphasizes that women, in the same cultural context, have different experiences of infertility shaped by their social location and cultural boundaries.³² The phrase stratified reproduction was first coined by Shellee Colen, and explains "how reproduction is structured across social... boundaries, empowering privileged women and disempowering less privileged women to reproduce."³³ Colen compares the reproductive differences between West Indian childcare workers and their employers in twentieth century New York. She maintains:

³¹ Gay Becker, *The Elusive Embryo: How Women and Men Approach New Reproductive Technologies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 237.

³² See, Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, "Introduction: Conceiving the New World Order," in *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 3-4; Arthur L. Greil, Julia McQuillan, and Kathleen Slauson-Blevins, "The Social Construction of Infertility," *Sociology Compass* 5/8 (2011): 737-739.

³³ Ginsburg and Rapp, "Introduction: Conceiving the New World Order," 3.

The cultural construction of parenting and childcare for West Indian workers and their U.S.-born employers illustrates some of the many ways in which reproduction is stratified. Although parenthood and reproductive labor are central in the lives of both West Indian childcare workers and their employers, they are valued and experienced differently.... Moreover, this very stratification tends to reproduce itself by reinforcing the inequalities on which it is based.”³⁴

Colen’s analysis highlights the sociopolitical differences between women based on their economic status. Other social scientists extend this characteristic to infertility. As Greil, Julia McQuillan, and Kathleen Slauson-Blevins suggest, racial and class “disparities in infertility treatment... are partially a reflection of disparities in economic resources.”³⁵ Certain women are afforded the opportunity to have children whereas others are discouraged to pursue treatment. Stratified reproduction thus shapes the discrimination of childlessness and constitutes the third major characteristic of the social constructionist model.

In sum, social-scientific scholars use the social constructionist model to show that cultural contexts shape the conceptualization of infertility as a disability. They employ this model as an alternative to the medical model and contend that a diagnosis of infertility only partially describes the cultural norms that classify this condition as a disability. These researchers also stress that social role expectations influence the discrimination of infertility. They discuss how some contexts place additional pressure on women to reproduce. Finally, social-scientific scholars use the social constructionist model to differentiate between infertile women in the same cultural context. Using stratified reproduction, they highlight that class, race, gender, age, and geopolitical location shapes the experience of childlessness. Thus, feminist-disability scholarship

³⁴ Shellee Colen, “‘Like a Mother to Them’: Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare Workers and Employers in New York,” in *Feminist Anthropology a Reader*, ed. Ellen Lewin (reprint; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 393.

³⁵ Greil, et al., “The Social Construction of Infertility,” 739.

that employs the social constructionist model redefines infertility as a construct to be investigated in the various sociocultural contexts it appears.

4.1.3 *The Misfit Model: The Cultural “Fit” of Infertility*

In addition to the social constructionist model, the conceptualization category includes the misfit model. This model was first proposed by Garland-Thomson in her 2011 essay “Misfits: A Feminist-Materialist Disability Concept.”³⁶ Her work recognizes the increasing unease with the social constructionist model among feminist-disability scholars. Garland-Thomson coined the term “misfit” to describe the experiences of women with disabilities. This model expands the scope of feminist-disability discourse by showing that infertility is simultaneously an experience and a culturally-enforced disability. Drawing from materialist feminism, the misfit model considers “how the particularities of embodiment interact with their environment.”³⁷ The model also articulates the dissonance between an individual’s impairments and their cultural context. It identifies that some disabilities lead to a “misfitting” in certain social settings. The misfit model thus moves “beyond disability as a cultural category and social identity toward a universalizing of misfitting as a contingent and fundamental fact of human embodiment.”³⁸ It stresses that disabilities continue to exist even if social and cultural discrimination is eliminated. In short, the misfit model highlights the relationship between embodiment and culture. It shows that shifting contexts impact women’s social status.³⁹

³⁶ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept” *Hypatia* 26 no. 3 (2011): 591-609.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 592.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 598.

³⁹ Like the misfit model, the cultural model of disability commonly used by disability scholars reconstructs the social systems that attribute stigma to infertile status. See, e.g., Junior and Schipper, “Disability Studies and the Bible,” in *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 24. However, this model also sidelines the experience of infertility. Thus, the significant difference between the cultural and misfit model involves the role of embodiment. The misfit model focuses closely on identity politics. See, Garland-Thomson, “Misfits,” 598.

Two characteristics influence feminist-disability scholarship on the misfit model. The first characteristic is the interaction between embodiment and the cultural conceptualization of disabilities. Under this model, a disability is the physical or cognitive deviation from normative culture. Garland-Thomson describes this interaction as trying to fit “a square peg in a round hole.”⁴⁰ She suggests: “The problem with a misfit...[is] not in either of the two things but rather in their juxtaposition, the awkward attempt to fit them together. When the spatial and temporal contexts shift, so does the fit, and with it meanings and consequences.”⁴¹ In other words, Garland-Thomson asserts that disabilities are formed through the interaction between embodiment and a social context. This interaction ascribes normativity to different forms of able-bodiedness. When people change contexts, or cultural expectations shift, certain disabilities fade while others appear.⁴² More importantly, Garland-Thomson stresses that “the relational and contingent quality of misfitting and fitting” emphasizes the importance of “the fit, not... the body.”⁴³ The misfit model thus reframes feminist-disability discourse. It shows that the “fit” or cultural norms lead to the marginalization of disabled people. When this characteristic is applied to infertility, the misfit model highlights the interaction between childless women and their cultural context. It explores how societies stigmatize infertile women when they do not fit into a socially prescribed role of motherhood. Essentially, the misfit model focuses on the interaction between cultural expectations and disabilities, including infertility. It moves the conceptualization of disabilities from embodiment to the cultural fit.

⁴⁰ Garland Thomson, “Misfits,” 539.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² For example, “when a wheelchair user encounters a flight of stairs, she does not get into the building; when a wheelchair user encounters a working elevator, she enters the space.” Ibid., 595.

⁴³ Ibid., 600.

The second characteristic Garland-Thomson emphasizes is the importance of subjugated knowledge which foregrounds social exclusion and discrimination. This characteristic of the misfit model challenges dominant societal discourse. It counters the expectation that disabled people need to be cured, fixed, or otherwise made to fit in. Garland-Thomson maintains:

[A]lthough misfitting can lead to segregation, exclusion from the rights of citizenship, and alienation from the majority community, it can also foster intense awareness of social injustice.... The dominant cultural story of proper human development is to fit into the world and depends upon a claim that our shapes are stable, predictable, and manageable.⁴⁴

The misfit model thus offers an alternative to the normalization of able-bodiedness. It centers on the experiences of disabled individuals and reclaims the misfit as a liberatory identity. Garland-Thomson's analysis also speaks to the experience of infertility. She rejects the "theoretical generic disabled body that can dematerialize if social... barriers no longer disable it."⁴⁵ Thus, while childlessness may not be overtly stigmatized in many contemporary societies, infertile individuals do fall under the misfit model. They counter the cultural logic that describes infertility as something to be cured. In short, the misfit model broadens the discussion on the experience of disabilities. It highlights the subjugated knowledge and social exclusion of disabled people.

In sum, the misfit model underscores the interaction between the experience and cultural conceptualization of disabilities. It centers on the fit as opposed to the embodiment of disabled people. Accordingly, the misfit model challenges the cultural discrimination of disabilities. The misfit model also highlights subjugated knowledge. This characteristic stresses that "[m]isfitting... informs disability experience."⁴⁶ It counters the cultural norms that emphasize

⁴⁴ Ibid., 597.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 592.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 598.

cures or treatments of disabilities. The misfit model also addresses infertility. It stresses the relationship between society and the individual experience of involuntary childlessness. The misfit model even recognizes that infertility contributes to the subjugated knowledge of misfitting. It complexifies the conceptual category and it provides another model to interpret the conceptualization and discrimination of infertility in different cultural contexts.

4.2 The Stigmatization Category: The Enacted and Felt Models

Social-scientific researchers use the enacted and felt models to describe and critique the discrediting and discreditable forms of stigma often connected to infertility.⁴⁷ They employ the enacted and felt models to interrogate the stigmatization of involuntary childlessness in different cultures, contexts, and texts. The enacted model encompasses the overt discrimination of infertility. It refers to the actions taken against infertile women in pronatalist societies. The felt model focuses on the “hidden” discrimination of infertility. It includes familial and personal discrimination which are often associated with cultural norms or social expectations. Both the enacted and felt model were first coined in the 1980s. Graham Scambler and Anthony Hopkins used these two models to outline the enacted and felt discrimination of epilepsy. In the 1990s, these two models were adopted by social-scientific scholars to discuss the stigmatization of infertility. To trace the transformation of the enacted and felt models, this section first discusses Scambler and Hopkins’s research on epilepsy. It shows how their description of the enacted and felt models lends itself to the subject of infertility. Next, it highlights the important characteristics of the enacted model, showing how the overt stigmatization of infertility leads to palpable consequences. Finally, the section addresses the felt model, which investigates discrimination related to role failure, spoiled identity, and familial action.

⁴⁷ Discrediting refers to visible conditions that can be overtly stigmatized. Discreditable means hidden. It can only lead to felt stigmatization.

4.2.1 *The Formation of the Enacted and Felt Models: Epilepsy to Infertility*

The enacted and felt models predate social-scientific scholarship on infertility. The two models were first used by Graham Scambler and Anthony Hopkins. In their 1986 article “Being Epileptic: Coming to Terms with Stigma,”⁴⁸ Scambler and Hopkins introduce two different models to describe the stigmatization of epilepsy. The enacted model “refers to instances of discrimination against people with epilepsy on the grounds of their perceived unacceptability or inferiority.”⁴⁹ Put another way, enacted stigma is a socially-constructed form of overt discrimination that defines epileptic individuals as non-normative. The felt model “refers principally to the fear of enacted stigma, but also encompasses a feeling of shame associated with being epileptic.”⁵⁰ It emphasizes that the stigma of epilepsy is based on social norms and expectations. Together, the enacted and felt models encompass the variations of the stigmatization of epilepsy. Scambler and Hopkins employ these models to differentiate between the overt and hidden discrimination of epileptic individuals.

In their work, Scambler and Hopkins reject the “orthodox” interpretation that “there is a high rate of [overt] discrimination against people with epilepsy.”⁵¹ They show that epileptic individuals rarely encounter public ignorance, stigmatization, or negative attitudes. Consequently, Scambler and Hopkins also reject the enacted model. They argue that overt discrimination does not account for the stigma associated with epilepsy. Instead, Scambler and Hopkins propose that the felt model offers “more explanatory power” for the discrimination of epilepsy.⁵² They state:

⁴⁸ Graham Scambler and Anthony Hopkins, “Being Epileptic: Coming to Terms with Stigma,” *Sociology of Health and Wellness* 8, no. 1 (1986): 26-43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 26.

Analogously, “having seizures” was less salient... than “being” epileptic. [The respondents] had a deep sense of what might be characterized as ontological (rather than moral) inferiority. Their “special view of the world” was founded upon these related aspects of felt stigma.⁵³

The fear of a seizure and facing public discrimination have a greater impact than actually having a seizure. Felt stigma strongly influences the discrimination of epilepsy. According to Scambler and Hopkins, some epileptics self-stigmatize by concealing their disability from close friends, family, and romantic partners.⁵⁴ Others avoid working full-time or turn down promotions in order to not disclose their epilepsy.⁵⁵ In either case, the felt model leads to the actual discrimination of epilepsy. Scambler and Hopkins thus use the felt model to describe the hidden stigma of this disability.

By the 1990s, social-scientific researchers began to use the felt model to analyze the discrimination of infertility. They employ this model to describe the veiled stigmatization of childlessness. One early adoptee of the felt model is Arthur L. Greil. In *Not Yet Pregnant*, Greil references Scambler and Hopkins’s research, noting:

The infertile have a condition neither visibly discrediting nor obviously discreditable. Unlike those with epilepsy, for example, who must be concerned that an inopportune seizure might reveal their stigmatizing condition to others, the infertile are relatively free to keep their stigma secret.... It would seem that for these infertile couples, as for the epileptics studied by Scambler [and Hopkins], felt stigma was the source of more anguish than enacted stigma.⁵⁶

Greil proposes that, to some degree, the discrimination of infertility is analogous to epilepsy. It is a condition often concealed in contemporary societies. He suggests that infertile women and men do not necessarily encounter overt discrimination. Therefore, Greil identifies felt stigmatization as a more pertinent problem for infertility. He describes this type of discrimination as a failed or

⁵³ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., the section “Family and personal relationships.” Ibid., 34-35.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., the section “Work experience” and “An alternative model to the orthodox viewpoint.” Ibid., 35-38.

⁵⁶ Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant*, 133.

“spoiled identity.”⁵⁷ The notion of a spoiled identity explains how social groups enforce cultural norms. These cultural norms lead to self and familial stigmatization. Infertile women are “socialized to accept cultural values” and must therefore deal with the incongruity between cultural expectations and their spoiled identity.⁵⁸ In short, Greil uses the felt model to articulate the hidden stigma of childlessness related to cultural norms. Accordingly, the felt model explains why some infertile women encounter hidden discrimination.

More recent researchers further elaborate on the application of the enacted and felt models. They employ the two models to differentiate between the overt and concealed stigmatization of childlessness. Some, like Greil, focus on felt stigma. For instance, Elizabeth A. Sternke and Kathleen Abrahamson discuss how the hidden stigma of infertility impedes women’s efforts “to be formally acknowledged... as disabled” under the Americans with Disabilities Act.⁵⁹ Others highlight overt discrimination. They use the enacted model to describe the explicit stigmatization of infertile women in pronatalist societies. For example, Larissa Remennick discusses the stigmatization of infertility in Israel, stating that “infertility bears a whole range of negative psychological and social ramifications for the affected couples and, especially, for women. Like in other pronatalist societies, childlessness (even involuntary) is... treated as a form of social deviance.”⁶⁰ Thus, social-scientific scholars investigating involuntary childlessness incorporate both the enacted and felt models. Unlike Graham and Scambler, who reject the enacted model, these researchers use both models to examine and critique variations in the stigmatization of infertility.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., *Ibid.*, 53; See also Scambler and Hopkins, “Being Epileptic,” 34; Both authors draw directly from the description of a “spoiled identity” in Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1963).

⁵⁸ Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant*, 7.

⁵⁹ Sternke and Abrahamson, “Perception of Women with Infertility on Stigma and Disability,” 4.

⁶⁰ Larissa Remennick, “Childless in the Land of Imperative Motherhood: Stigma and Coping Among Infertile Israeli Women,” *Sex Roles* 43 no. 11/12 (2000): 822.

In sum, social-scientific scholars use both the enacted and felt models to describe the stigma of infertility. They employ these models to differentiate between the discrediting and discreditable experiences of childlessness. Scambler and Hopkins propose these models to address the hidden stigma of epilepsy. Their interpretation rejects the enacted model and replaces it with the felt model. Likewise, Greil adopts the felt model to outline the invisible stigma of infertility. He incorporates this model into his research, showing that involuntary childlessness relates to a spoiled identity. However, later researchers reintroduce the enacted model to study infertility. They use the enacted model to critique the explicit discrimination of infertility in pronatalist communities.

4.2.2 The Enacted Model: Overt Stigmatization of Infertility

The enacted model highlights the overt stigmatization of involuntary childlessness. It “refers to actual status loss and specific acts of discrimination.... These status losses and acts of discrimination are toward a stigmatized group.”⁶¹ As an enacted stigma, infertility relates to women’s loss of social status, prestige, economic, or physical safety. It underscores socio-cultural marginalization—including inheritance restrictions, divorce, polygamy, physical and sexual abuse, or even community expulsion.⁶² The enacted model stresses that infertility is a discrediting condition that leads to overt stigmatization. Often it focuses on pronatalist societies that actively and explicitly enforce social norms which require all women to reproduce. The enacted model shows how these communities publicly ostracize and discriminate against women’s infertility.

⁶¹ Sterneke and Abrahamson, “Perception of Women with Infertility on Stigma and Disability,” 5-6.

⁶² See, Frank van Balen and Henny M. W. Bos, “The Social and Cultural Consequences of Being Childless in Poor-Resource Areas,” *ObGyn* 1, no. 2 (2009): 106-121, esp. 107-108. On divorce see, Marcia C. Inhorn, *Infertility and Patriarchy: The Cultural Politics of Gender and Family Life in Egypt* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 26-30.

Two characteristics of the enacted model influence social-scientific scholarship on infertility. The first characteristic is the overt stigmatization of infertility in pronatalist societies. The enacted model underscores how pronatalism ties women's value to their reproductive capacity. Or, as the anthropologist Susan Forsythe explains: "In a pronatalist society, if a person reveals his or her infertility there could be discrimination from the society.... There is added pressure on couples to reproduce and follow what society has prescribed as normal."⁶³ The social stigmatization of female infertility in pronatalist societies has different levels of severity. Each community reacts to childlessness in different ways. Frank van Balen and Henny M. W. Bos note responses ranging from "status loss" to outright "rejection, being an outcast and physical abuse perpetrated by community members."⁶⁴ In addition to these dangers, infertility often has economic ramifications. After all, children contribute to household upkeep and "support their aging parents in the absence of social support systems for the elderly."⁶⁵ Thus, social-scientific scholars highlight the very real discrimination infertile women encounter in pronatalist societies. They recognize that in "global locations social and economic reasons for having children are often prominent.... Given the multifaceted nature of child desire in many non-Western societies, not having children is seldom viewed as a choice or a lifestyle option."⁶⁶ In short, the enacted model explores the various ways pronatalist societies stigmatize childlessness. They critique the overt discrimination of infertility in these cultural contexts.

The second characteristic stressed by social-scientific scholars on infertility is that the enacted model critiques certain feminist analyses of motherhood. This characteristic challenges

⁶³ Susan Forsythe, "Social Stigma and the Medicalization of Infertility," *Journal of the Manitoba Anthropology Students' Association* 28 (2009): 29.

⁶⁴ Balen and Bos, "The social and cultural consequences of being childless," 107.

⁶⁵ Fikir Aseffa, "Socio-cultural Perceptions of Infertility and their Implications: A Study of Women Experiencing Childlessness in South Gondar, Ethiopia" (master's thesis, University of Bergen, 2011), 84. See also Balen and Inhorn, "Interpreting Infertility," 8-9.

⁶⁶ Balen and Inhorn, "Interpreting Infertility," 9.

rejectionist feminist interpretations that denigrate mothers as dupes of the patriarchal system. Feminist-disability scholars stress the “ways women and men work with and against mothering stereotypes, are liberated and oppressed by them.... Writing on patriarchy and infertility no longer ignore[s] experience but precisely [finds] the expression of the one through the other.”⁶⁷ Their research explains how infertile women learn to navigate and are shaped by their communities. Feminist-disability scholars move their critique from childless women to the pronatalist system that discriminates against them. For example, Marcia C. Inhorn challenges feminist analyses of motherhood for failing “to acknowledge the issues of women’s agency and desire—namely that women in places such as Egypt are genuinely enthusiastic about having children.”⁶⁸ She claims that a feminist interpretation must simultaneously side with women in their reproductive efforts even as it critiques the patriarchal system underlying their marginalization. Accordingly, Inhorn recounts the stories of infertile Egyptian women to “give voice to such individuals and groups.... thereby revealing their consciousness and subjectivity under various forms of oppression.”⁶⁹ Her analysis underscores the enacted forms of stigmatization that women encounter. It also critiques feminist rejectionist interpretations that do not account for the unique experiences of these infertile women.

In sum, the enacted model underscores the overt discrimination of childlessness in pronatalist communities. Researchers who use the enacted model investigate and critique the explicit stigmatization of infertility. Some social-scientific scholars outline the various social,

⁶⁷ Charis Thompson, “Fertile Ground: Feminists Theorize Infertility,” in *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*, ed. Marcia C. Inhorn and Frank von Balen (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 66.

⁶⁸ Marcia C. Inhorn, “Missing Motherhood: Infertility, Technology, and Poverty in Egyptian Women’s Lives,” in *Ideologies and Technologies of Motherhood: Race, Class, Sexuality, Nationalism*, ed. Helena Ragoné and France Winddance Twine (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 143.

⁶⁹ Marcia C. Inhorn, *Infertility and Patriarchy*, 41. To Inhorn, this subjectivity signifies a move away from religious texts and traditions. Instead, she emphasizes the importance of ethnographic research.

economic, and physical abuses carried out against infertile women. They challenge the overt stigma that these communities attribute to childlessness. Other scholars highlight infertile women's experiences. They incorporate these women's unique perspectives into a critique of patriarchal ideology. They also challenge feminist rejectionist approaches that present women as complicit with pronatalist society. The enacted model thus addresses each of the overt forms of discrimination that stigmatize infertility in pronatalist societies.

4.2.3 The Felt Model: Infertility as a Hidden Disability

The felt model moves away from a cultural analysis of the explicit discrimination of infertility. It focuses on social norms, the experience of role failure, and hidden stigmatization. The felt model shows that the stigma of childlessness takes multiple forms, including familial discrimination and self-stigmatization. Since these types of stigma are not readily evident, the felt model stresses that the discrimination of infertility is often hidden or "invisible." The model also explores the notion of a spoiled identity. It relates to the discrepancy between involuntary childlessness and the normative cultural expectation of motherhood.

Two characteristics of the felt model stand out in social-scientific scholarship on infertility. The first characteristic pertains to the hidden or invisible stigma of infertility. Accordingly, the discrimination of childlessness is not always easily identifiable. It is a "discrediting" rather than a "discreditable" stigma.⁷⁰ Arthur L. Greil explains:

The invisibility of infertility [reinforces] the sense of otherness felt by the infertile, especially infertile wives. In spite of its invisibility, infertility [remains] salient... Feelings of failure [lead] infertile wives to see themselves as fundamentally different from fertile friends, relatives, and others."⁷¹

⁷⁰ See, e.g., Elizabeth Sternke, "Unruly Bodies: Infertility as a Disability" (PhD diss., Purdue University, 2010), 11-14.

⁷¹ Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant*, 146.

Thus, according to Greil, infertility is an invisible disability. It is a condition that is real even though it often “appear[s] to have few or otherwise vague visual markers to the outside... observer.”⁷² This type of stigmatization is a fundamental principle of the felt model. Infertility operates in the liminal space between ‘ability’ and ‘disability.’ It remains invisible to society even as social norms lead to women’s marginalization. Put another way, “It is not so much that society is discriminating against women... but a woman’s internal view of herself as not belonging to the normative reproductive group that... causes so much pain.”⁷³ Felt stigmatization thus derives from social attitudes and expectations of human reproduction.⁷⁴ The idealization of normative motherhood and the presentation of bodies as reproductively-able reinforce the hidden discrimination of infertility.

The second characteristic social-scientific researchers on infertility emphasize is infertile women’s spoiled identity. The spoiled identity is closely related to familial discrimination and self-stigmatization. This characteristic addresses how the normalization of motherhood influences women’s and their family’s perception of infertility. Spoiled identity refers to the interaction between the experience of infertility and socially-instilled notions about fecundity. Involuntary childlessness leads women to internalize “not only the societal definition that fertility is the normal state of affairs, but also the socially instilled judgement that people who suffer must be somehow inferior.”⁷⁵ Spoiled identity leads to different forms of discrimination. For instance, Greil recognizes that “family members... [become] representatives of the fertile world whose very presence drives home the intolerance of infertility” when they “assume that

⁷² Leslie G. Roman, “Go Figure! Public Pedagogies, Invisible Impairments and the Performative Paradoxes of Visibility as Veracity,” *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 13 (2009): 678.

⁷³ Sarah Elizabeth Mealey, “The Hidden Society: A Sub-Culture of Women Dealing with Infertility,” (master’s thesis, San Jose State University, 2006), 15.

⁷⁴ This stigma “comes partly from social oppression encoded in attitudes and practices.” See, Garland-Thomson, “Misfit,” 594.

⁷⁵ Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant*, 55.

pregnancy is normal... easy to achieve and that the only reason for not having children is lack of desire.”⁷⁶ He stresses that even well-meaning relatives reinforce cultural notions of the deviance of childlessness. Similarly, Elizabeth Sternke and Kathleen Abrahamson emphasize forms of self-stigmatization, including “incurring negative beliefs about themselves, loss of self-esteem and self-efficacy, and [isolation from] others, including their own in-group.”⁷⁷ Socially-instilled beliefs about reproduction cause childless women to discriminate against themselves. Thus, a spoiled identity leads to infertile women’s marginalization. It influences family pressure, self-stigmatization, and even social isolation.

In sum, the felt model describes the hidden or invisible stigmatization of infertility. It shows that involuntary childlessness operates as an invisible disability, and it highlights the importance of social attitudes and norms in the marginalization of infertility. The felt model explains that infertility is the result of a spoiled identity. It refers to familial discrimination and self-stigmatization based on the internalization of the cultural value of children. The felt model thus exposes and critiques the often-hidden discrimination of infertility. It recognizes that infertile women often experience different types of marginalization based on the normative view of motherhood.

4.3 Models for the Study of Infertility and a Hermeneutic of Reproduction: A Conclusion

The models discussed in this chapter provide different templates for identifying the conceptualization and stigmatization of infertility. Models under the *conceptual category* define infertility as a disability. They highlight the social and cultural influences that discriminate against childlessness. The models under the *stigmatization category* focus on the different types of stigma associated with infertility. They differentiate between the explicit and implicit forms of

⁷⁶ Ibid., 143.

⁷⁷ Sternke and Abrahamson, “Perception of Women with Infertility on Stigma and Disability,” 5.

discrimination. Each of the four models elaborate on different aspects of infertility. The *social constructionist model* explores the link between childlessness and its social designation as a disability. It suggests that the portrayal of infertility relies on both the personal desire for children coupled with societal pressure to reproduce. The *misfit model* emphasizes the embodiment and agency of infertile women. This model stresses an individual's "fit" in different cultural contexts and contrasts the social exclusion and discrimination of disabilities with subjugated knowledge. The *enacted model* centers on the overt stigmatization of infertile women in pronatalist communities. It offers a complex critique of pronatalist ideology and challenges the mandate to reproduce. The *felt model* dwells on the "invisibility" and the hidden discrimination of infertility. Drawing on the concept of a spoiled identity, the felt model focuses on different forms of stigmatization, including self and familial discrimination.

The social-scientific models of infertility are important to the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. The social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models shape the understanding of Hannah's infertility. First, the social constructionist model conceptualizes Hannah's infertility as a disability. It shows that her disability is a social construct that must be understood in the cultural-literary context of 1 Samuel 1. The social constructionist model also emphasizes stratified reproduction. It underscores the differences between Hannah and Peninnah based on their reproductive status. Second, the misfit model centers on the fit between Hannah's infertility and the cultural-literary setting of 1 Samuel. It moves the scholarly critique of Hannah's childlessness from her character to the cultural-literary expectation that she must reproduce. The misfit model highlights Hannah's subjugated knowledge. The model explores how Hannah's experience illustrates the cultural-literary discrimination of infertility. Third, the enacted model describes the overt stigmatization of infertility in biblical literature. While this model has proven

popular among biblical exegetes, its application is unsuitable to understand Hannah's involuntary childlessness. Fourth, the felt model addresses the implicit stigmatization of her infertility. It focuses on Hannah's spoiled identity leading to familial discrimination and self-stigmatization. The felt model also underscores that Hannah's infertility operates as an invisible disability. It explores how Hannah avoids disclosing her identity because she fears that her discrimination may become overt. Together, the four models highlight different aspects of Hannah's characterization, conceptualization, and stigmatization. The next chapter interprets 1 Samuel 1 with a hermeneutic of reproduction. This approach employs the four models to analyze Hannah's infertility.

5. Applying a Hermeneutic of Reproduction to 1 Samuel 1

Social-scientific research on infertility highlights the conceptualization and stigmatization of involuntary childlessness. It uses four specific models—the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models—to describe the sociocultural expectation of motherhood and the discrimination of infertile couples. This chapter applies the four social-scientific models to 1 Samuel 1 to develop a hermeneutic of reproduction. The social constructionist model underscores the social role expectations for biblical women like Hannah. It shows how these social roles establish Hannah’s infertility as a disability. The social constructionist model also addresses the stratified reproduction between Hannah and Peninnah. It illustrates that the power dynamics in Hannah’s family lead to her discrimination. The misfit model focuses on Hannah’s “fit” in the cultural-literary context of 1 Samuel 1. It expands disability biblical scholarship on infertility, by stressing the interaction between the experience of childlessness and the context of the biblical text. Additionally, the misfit model underscores Hannah’s subjugated knowledge. This characteristic centers on the experience and discrimination of infertility. The enacted model demonstrates the overt stigmatization of childlessness. This model has proven popular among biblical scholars but does not adequately address the stigma of Hannah’s involuntary childlessness. The felt model fixates on Hannah’s spoiled identity. The characteristic of a spoiled identity underlines the familial and personal stigmatization of infertility in 1 Samuel 1. The felt model also shows that Hannah’s childlessness is invisible, illustrating that she tries to hide her disability from Eli the priest. Together, the four models center on Hannah’s conceptualization

and stigmatization. The application of these models highlights the importance of Hannah's characterization as an infertile woman to the interpretation of this text. Thus, the use of social-scientific scholarship on infertility helps overcome exegetical assumptions advanced by historical and literary interpretations, as demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 3. The social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models establish that Hannah's childlessness should not be reduced to economic or theological issues. Rather, her story is about infertility.

The application of the four social-scientific models produces a complex description of Hannah's infertility in 1 Samuel 1 in the following five ways. In the first way, the social constructionist and misfit models underscore the importance of social and cultural influences on the description of infertility. The two models challenge the economic and religious categories. They emphasize that culture helps shape the conceptualization of Hannah's childlessness. In the second way, the enacted and felt models offer a varied analysis of the stigmatization of Hannah's infertility. Both models recognize that the stigma of childlessness is carried out on both societal and familial levels. In the third way, the four models stress the importance of Hannah's experience, contrasting the literary representation of her infertility with the stigma of involuntary childlessness. The models differentiate between the textual account of Hannah's conception and the reality that many women are stigmatized for their inability to become pregnant. In the fourth way, the models offer an interdisciplinary approach to infertility rooted in both disability and feminist scholarship in the social sciences. The models emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to Hannah's infertility, which recognizes the contributions of both disability and feminist biblical scholars. In the fifth way, the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models establish a conversation between biblical studies and social-scientific studies on infertility. They bring 1 Samuel 1 into an interdisciplinary conversation on the topic of human reproduction.

Four sections structure the chapter. The first section applies the social constructionist model to analyze the social role expectations for Hannah in 1 Samuel 1. It also evaluates the conflict between Hannah and Peninnah, using the characteristic of stratified reproduction. This characteristic relates to the privileges given to Peninnah because of her reproductive capacity. The second section explores how the misfit model offers an alternative explanation for the discrimination of Hannah's childlessness. It examines the cultural-literary representation of infertility as a disability in 1 Samuel 1, including economic and religious expectations. The section highlights the discrepancy between Hannah's childlessness and her fit in the biblical text. It also focuses on Hannah's subjugated knowledge underlying her social marginalization. The third section investigates Hannah's infertility with the enacted model. It outlines how biblical scholars use this model with other narratives. It also establishes that, in the case of 1 Samuel 1, the model does not adequately account for the stigmatization of Hannah's infertility. The fourth section uses the felt model as an alternative explanation for the stigma of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. It argues that social expectations of motherhood lead to Hannah's spoiled identity, thereby impacting the discrimination of childlessness on personal and familial levels. It also considers the hidden aspects of the stigmatization of Hannah's childlessness. The fourth section explains that the stigma of infertility in 1 Samuel 1 is a type of felt discrimination. The conclusion summarizes the contributions of the four models to the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. It explains why the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models are necessary to address the complexity of Hannah's infertility.

5.1 The Social Constructionist Model: Social Role Expectations and Stratified Reproduction

The social constructionist model claims that cultural norms dictate the conceptualization and the discrimination of infertility. It focuses on social norms that lead to the categorization of

infertility as a disabling condition. The social constructionist model thus differentiates between the experience of infertility and its structural discrimination. Or, as Nyasha Junior and Jeremy Schipper note, it distinguishes between “impairment” or “a biological anomaly... [and] the social and structural discrimination that people with impairments face.”¹ When applied to 1 Samuel 1, the social constructionist model shapes the interpretation of Hannah’s childlessness in two ways. First, the model describes the discrimination of Hannah’s infertility by underscoring social role expectations. It explains that social roles in other biblical texts dictate the marginalization of Hannah’s character. Second, the social constructionist model uses the characteristic of stratified reproduction to evaluate the differences between Peninnah and Hannah based on their reproductive status. It explains that Peninnah’s ability to produce children gives her a social and economic advantage over Hannah in the same cultural-literary context.

5.1.1 Social Role Expectations: Patrilineality, God’s Command, and Hannah’s Ingenuity

One characteristic of the social constructionist model that is central to the interpretation of Hannah’s infertility is social role expectations. This characteristic explains that the conceptualization and discrimination of Hannah’s childlessness relies on cultural norms and the social positions available to biblical women. It describes how biblical narratives define women’s roles as mothers.² Like Hannah, women are expected to reproduce. Consequently, 1 Samuel 1 is a story about a woman who defies social role expectations. Hannah does not initially fit the role of a mother. She falls outside the normative boundaries of society. The interpretation based on

¹ Nyasha Junior and Jeremy Schipper, “Disability Studies and the Bible,” in *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 22.

² Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 44-90.

the social constructionist model thus outlines the limited options available to infertile women like Hannah.

Three factors shape the social role expectations for Hannah as well as biblical women who are depicted as infertile. The first factor relates to patrilineal lineage. Although biblical scholars rarely refer to the social constructionist model, many exegetes elaborate on the significance of the patrilineal system in 1 Samuel 1. As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, interpreters argue that Hannah's role as an infertile woman must be understood within this system.³ For instance, Susan Ackerman states that patrilineal descent was "important for maintaining a father's lineage... and for transmitting through the generations the landholdings that every Israelite family claimed perpetually to hold as its inalienable patrimony."⁴ Hannah's infertility is a problem both for the survival of Elkanah's family line and the Israelite community as a whole. Her children would bolster the prospects of future generations. The patrilineal system establishes the social role for women in biblical literature. It relies on biblical women's ability to bear sons, and so infertile women like Hannah do not fit into the accepted social role of a mother.

The second factor that shapes biblical women's social roles pertains to God's command to procreate. Again, biblical scholars recognize this factor in Hannah's marginalization. Joel S. Baden and Ackerman mention the command in Gen. 1:28 which states: "Be fruitful and

³ See, e.g., Peter R. Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, Cambridge Bible Commentary 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, Vol. IV Vow and Desire 1 Sam. 1-12 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993); Philip E. Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Old Testament Narrative with its Ancient Audience* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2012); Joel S. Baden, "The Matriarchs as Models," in *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*.

⁴ Susan Ackerman, "Women in Ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Available at: <http://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-45?print=pdf> [accessed on March 1, 2019].

multiply.”⁵ This verse illustrates the role expectation for women and men to become mothers and fathers. As Baden notes: “For thousands of years, these words have been understood as a divine imperative to each and every individual: it is every person’s responsibility to produce offspring according to God’s will.”⁶ In biblical texts, women and men are commanded to be fertile and produce children. At least initially, Hannah breaks this command. She does not have children and therefore does not follow social role expectations. In short, the command to procreate emphasizes that biblical women like Hannah are expected to become mothers. The command gives a religious reason for Hannah’s social marginalization, establishing her inability to follow social role expectations.

The third factor relates to Hannah’s ingenuity in 1 Samuel 1. She internalizes the social role expectations for infertile women and actively mimics the annunciation type-scene in her effort to obtain a child. The annunciation type-scene is a literary genre first proposed by Robert Alter to describe the features of biblical narratives dealing with infertility.⁷ Alter includes Hannah’s story under the genre and suggests that she “follows the expected sequence of narrative motifs” leading to conception.⁸ However, the characteristic of social role expectations reframes the interpretation of this story. Hannah does more than follow the expected sequence of events. She takes initiative in her reproductive efforts. Hannah, rather than her husband, prays for conception (v. 10). She also makes a vow that her son will not drink fermented beverages and will not shave her child’s head (v. 11). The vow mirrors the command given to Samson’s mother

⁵ See, Joel S. Baden, “The Blessing and the Curse” in *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Joel S. Baden, “Be Fruitful and Multiply: The Dangers of Divine Blessing,” *Communitas: Journal of Education Beyond the Walls* 14 (2018): 4-8; Ackerman, “Women in Ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible.”

⁶ Baden, “Be Fruitful and Multiply,” 5.

⁷ See, e.g., Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative: Revised and Updated*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011).

⁸ Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings a Translation with Commentary* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 241.

in Judg. 13:4-5.⁹ In other words, Hannah purposefully follows the social role for infertile women. She recognizes the cultural norms that identify infertility as a problem, and she mimics infertile matriarchs in her effort to obtain a child. Hannah's initiative thus expands the literary analysis of the annunciation type-scene. Her ingenuity shows that social role expectations influence the characterization of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1.

The three factors of patrilineality, God's command, and Hannah's ingenuity advance a reading of 1 Samuel 1 that exposes the cultural norms and social positions available to biblical women. First, patrilineal lineage highlights the limited social roles of biblical women. It emphasizes the importance of human reproduction to the patrilineal line, including Elkanah's family. Second, God's command to reproduce reinforces the social role of motherhood. It underscores the elevated status of fertile mothers and fathers in biblical texts. Third, Hannah's ingenuity in mirroring the infertile matriarchs shows that she internalizes the limited social role available to her. She follows the steps of the annunciation type-scene to resolve the issue of her involuntary childlessness. Thus, the social constructionist model reframes how to interpret this narrative. It centers on patrilineal legacy, God's command to reproduce, and Hannah's actions, showing that they reinforce the social role expectations for women in biblical narratives.

5.1.2 Stratified Reproduction: Power Dynamics Between Hannah, Peninnah, and Elkanah

Another characteristic of the social constructionist model essential to the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 is stratified reproduction. This characteristic expounds on the social differences between Peninnah, Hannah, and Elkanah. It moves "away from the traditional... focus on how reproduction is structured within cultures" to "how reproduction is structured across social and

⁹ See, Mary Callaway, *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979), 36-37.

cultural boundaries.”¹⁰ Stratified reproduction thus focuses on power dynamics. It emphasizes the power relations between Hannah and Peninnah, which points to Hannah’s exclusion on the basis of her infertility. It also highlights how “patriarchal powers sometimes efface the centrality of women to reproduction, even those aspects that are inseparable from female bodies.”¹¹ Essentially, stratified reproduction focuses on the disparity between Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah is treated differently than other women in this narrative because of her infertility. She also encounters pressure from her husband not to reproduce.

Stratified reproduction takes two specific forms. The first form stresses the power dynamics between women in the same cultural context. Verses 4 and 5 illustrate this power imbalance. Hannah and Peninnah each receive different portions according to their social positions. These portions differentiate between the two women and alter their social status in the narrative. For instance, in verse 4 Elkanah gives Peninnah and her children each a portion of the sacrificial meal. In the following verse, he also gives Hannah a “portion, one of nostrils.”¹² Some biblical scholars suggest that Hannah receives a “special portion,” that represents her elevated position within the family. Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg proposes that these three words signify “a particularly large piece, a portion of honour.... Hannah must have been treated by her husband in some special way to explain the taunts which Peninnah used to fling on such an occasion.”¹³

Other exegetes postulate that Hannah’s portion is “regular.”¹⁴ They emphasize that Hannah holds

¹⁰ Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, “Introduction: Conceiving the New World Order,” in *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² This is a literal translation of the phrase. For alternative translations of *'ap-pā-yim* see: P. Kyle McCarter, *I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 8 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 52.

¹³ Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1964), 24.

¹⁴ Using this translation, Polzin claims that: “The narrator is able to penetrate Elkanah’s consciousness because, even though this husband gives many portions to Peninnah but only one portion to Hannah, the narrator is able to

a social status equal to Peninnah. However, this translation does not recognize the discrepancy between the numerous portions Peninnah receives and the one Hannah collects. Usually, scholars translate אפיִם as “face” or “double.” Yet as Seppo Sipilä recognizes, the concrete meaning of a dual portion “does not fit our text” and the idiomatic translation of face “appears only... [in narratives] about bowing to the ground in order to show respect.”¹⁵ Since neither interpretation fits the context of verse 5, another possibility is that the enigmatic phrase refers to Hannah’s lower status. In this interpretation, the different portions represent the stratified reproduction between Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah receives multiple portions because of her many children. Hannah receives one portion. Even then, the narrative marks her portion as different. By highlighting the different portions, the characteristic of stratified reproduction underscores Hannah’s social marginalization. While Hannah and Peninnah are in the same cultural context, Hannah’s infertile status does not give her the same social privileges as Peninnah. The power imbalance between the two women leads to a tangible disparity illustrated through sacrificial portions.

The second form of stratified reproduction pertains to the power dynamics between Hannah and her husband, Elkanah. Elkanah’s conversation with Hannah in verse 8 undermines her efforts to conceive thereby effacing her potential identity as a fertile mother. Put another way, Elkanah secures his future through Peninnah’s children and trivializes Hannah’s infertility. At first glance, Elkanah’s response appears to go against pronatalist expectations. As Janice P. De-Whyte notes, his portrayal “is far from the stereotype of patriarchy, an autocratic and

tell us that Elkanah nevertheless loves Hannah.” See, Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History: Part Two 1 Samuel* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1989), 19.

¹⁵ Seppo Sipilä, “On Portions, Nostrils, and Anger—A Crux Interpretum in 1 Samuel 1.5,” *The Bible Translator* 64 (2013): 78-79.

emotionally distant husband.”¹⁶ He seemingly “cares for the wellbeing and happiness of his wife,” regardless of her inability to have children.¹⁷ However, stratified reproduction reminds exegetes that only some women are encouraged to become mothers. Since Peninnah already has children, Hannah’s infertility is an insignificant issue for the patriarch. Elkanah’s declaration, “Am I not better to you than ten sons” (v. 8), conveys this point. He recognizes Hannah’s infertility but then immediately proposes that she give up this social role. Elkanah identifies himself as a replacement for Hannah’s hypothetical children. Thus, the application of stratified reproduction socially elevates Peninnah as a mother while it denigrates the infertile Hannah. Elkanah actively discourages Hannah’s reproductive efforts and refocuses her suffering onto himself.¹⁸

The two forms of stratified reproduction highlight the disparity between Peninnah and Hannah. They show that the power dynamics between Peninnah and Hannah reflect the social privileges afforded to fecund women in biblical texts. Peninnah receives multiple portions for her entire family while Hannah gets one portion. The sacrificial meal signals Peninnah’s high social status and, on a practical level, ensures her and her children’s survival. Hannah’s meal represents her marginal status and highlights the danger she faces upon Elkanah’s death.¹⁹ The social constructionist model also identifies the power dynamics between Hannah and Elkanah.

Hannah’s husband argues that she does not need to reproduce. He ignores her frustration with

¹⁶ Janice P. De-Whyte, *Wom(b)an: A Cultural-Narrative Reading of the Hebrew Bible Barrenness Narratives* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2018), 149.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Similarly, Fewell and Gunn note that Elkanah supports Hannah in that she “does not have to be a mother to be a person of worth” even though he “turns her sorrow into something about himself.” See, Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, & Promise: The Subject of the Bible’s First Story* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 137).

¹⁹ See, Jo Ann Hackett, “1 and 2 Samuel,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary: Twentieth-Anniversary Edition Revised and Updated*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 154. For my detailed discussion see Chapter 2 Section 2.2.3.

involuntary childlessness, coming across as an emotionally distant uninterested husband. Still, 1 Samuel 1 presents fertility as normal and desirable. It directly attributes power and prestige in the household to women like Peninnah who have children. Thus, by chastising Hannah, Elkanah demonstrates the erasure of certain women's reproductive identities. He fails to acknowledge the impact infertility has on Hannah's character.

5.2 The Misfit Model: Cultural-Literary Expectations and Subjugated Knowledge

The misfit model argues that infertility is both an experience and a culturally-enforced disability. It focuses on the conflict between childlessness and cultural communities that require fertility. This model changes how to view Hannah's infertility in 1 Samuel 1. It highlights the dissonance between Hannah's childlessness and the expectation that she will become a mother. The model challenges the cultural assumption that infertility is a personal failure. Two characteristics of the misfit model stand out. The first characteristic investigates the discrepancy between the experience of Hannah's infertility and cultural-literary expectations about her status as a mother. The second characteristic explores Hannah's subjugated knowledge which highlights the discrimination of infertility in 1 Samuel 1. Both characteristics stress the importance of cultural norms on the conceptualization of infertility as a disability according to the misfit model.

5.2.1 Fit as a Cultural-Literary Critique: Misfit's Connection with Disability Interpretations

The first characteristic of the misfit model that is essential to the interpretation of Hannah's infertility is the "fit" or interaction between the experience of infertility and the cultural-literary context of 1 Samuel 1. This characteristic demonstrates that the discrimination of Hannah's involuntary childlessness is based on her ability to successfully integrate into the cultural norms of her community. The misfit model explains that Hannah's infertility deviates

from the expected cultural definition of women as mothers. She does not fit the cultural-literary context of the narrative, rendering her a “misfit.” The misfit model thus emphasizes Hannah’s inability to fit properly into the narrative that values women’s fecundity. She does not fall under an accepted cultural-literary role at the beginning of 1 Samuel 1.

The misfit model stresses that cultural influences shape the conceptualization of Hannah’s childlessness. This model shows that the discrimination of Hannah’s infertility relates to the cultural-literary context which demands that women must become mothers. Further, the misfit model emphasizes the relational qualities of the discrimination of Hannah’s infertility. The conceptualization of Hannah’s childlessness as a disability relates to the interaction between the cultural-literary context and Hannah’s experience. Hannah encounters discrimination because she does not follow the culturally-mandated role. The misfit model thus reframes Hannah’s involuntary childlessness as a secondary issue and maintains that the central problem is her inability to fit into the cultural-literary context of 1 Samuel 1. Shifting from Hannah’s infertility to her character’s fit has considerable ramifications. The misfit model does not critique Hannah’s childlessness. Rather, it challenges the “misfit,” the difference between Hannah’s experience and the cultural expectation for her to become pregnant.

Like the misfit model, disability biblical scholars emphasize the cultural context of 1 Samuel 1 in their analyses of Hannah’s infertility.²⁰ These exegetes articulate “how cultural notions of disability operate in biblical texts.”²¹ They propose that Hannah’s childlessness relates to cultural norms. For example, Jeremy Schipper contends that Hannah’s infertility “contains a social component.”²² He suggests that Peninnah’s mistreatment, Elkanah’s chastisement, and

²⁰ For a detailed account of these analyses, see Chapter 3 Section 3.1.

²¹ Junior and Schipper, “Disability Studies and the Bible,” 24.

²² Jeremy Schipper, *Disability & Isaiah’s Suffering Servant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.

even God closing Hannah's womb articulate a "social dynamic" that makes Hannah's heart sad (v.8).²³ Said differently, Schipper argues that the conceptualization of Hannah's involuntary childlessness is based on the social pressure to reproduce. Social expectations influence the portrayal of her disability. He states: "We rarely determine whether a person has a disability by a medical diagnosis alone. We also consider our social expectations for a person of his or her age."²⁴ Schipper frames Hannah's childlessness as an issue related to cultural norms. He identifies multiple cultural-literary components in 1 Samuel 1 that lead to Hannah's discrimination. He frames her infertility as an issue related to the cultural context.

Connecting the misfit model with disability interpretations demonstrate that Hannah's infertility relates to cultural norms. Both of them center on the socio-cultural conceptualization of infertility as a disability. However, the misfit model takes the analysis of Hannah's infertility a step further. It shows that Hannah does not "fit" into this cultural context, and so it critiques the cultural-literary discrimination of her infertility. By highlighting both the cultural norms and the experience of infertility, the misfit model reshapes how to interpret Hannah's involuntary childlessness. It expands the cultural analysis of Hannah's infertility that disability scholars do not connect to Hannah's marginalization.

5.2.2 Subjugated Knowledge: Cultural Discrimination and the Religious Model of Infertility

The second characteristic of the misfit model, termed subjugated knowledge, relates to the issues around social injustice and the discrimination of disabilities. Subjugated knowledge stresses that misfitting in society leads to exclusion, alienation, or even expulsion. In turn, this characteristic counters the "virulent cultural mandate to expunge disability" by reclaiming the

²³ Ibid., 21.

²⁴ Ibid., 20.

experiences of disabled people.²⁵ The application of the misfit model to infertility critiques the religious category that other characters use to discriminate against Hannah's childlessness. Hannah's subjugated knowledge counters the religious argumentation that her infertility is a divinely produced disability. The characteristic of subjugated knowledge redefines her childlessness as a cultural exclusion that uses the religious category of infertility.

Hannah's subjugated knowledge challenges the religious model of infertility in two different ways. In the first way, subjugated knowledge counters the symbolic interpretation of Hannah's infertility which refers to the suffering of all Israel.²⁶ Some biblical scholars, such as Mary Callaway, use the religious model to argue that Hannah's infertility symbolizes the suffering of the Israelite people. As she contends: "Hannah functions as a symbol of a group, perhaps even Israel herself.... She functions not primarily as a mother but as one who has been rescued by Yahweh."²⁷ This interpretation moves away from the analysis of Hannah's discrimination to the symbolic metaphor of the broken covenant between Israel and God. Such exegetes do not readily consider Hannah's own suffering or the implications of her infertility in this narrative. The misfit model refocuses this discourse, moving from a symbolic interpretation of Hannah to one that concentrates on her experience of infertility. Under the misfit model, Hannah, rather than the monarchy, is central to the story. Her involuntary childlessness, as opposed to the symbolic nature of her suffering, is the key point of analysis. The interpretation of

²⁵ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept," *Hypatia* 26 no. 3 (2011): 603.

²⁶ See, e.g., Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation 9 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990); Feidhlimidh T. Magennis, *First and Second Samuel*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary 8 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012); James D. Newsome, *1 Samuel 2 Samuel: Knox Preaching Guides* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1983).

²⁷ Callaway, *Sing, O Barren One*, 57.

Hannah's childlessness as a disability uplifts the experiences of infertile women "that are [often] missing from existing accounts."²⁸

The second way subjugated knowledge challenges the religious model is by highlighting how Elkanah and Peninnah discriminate against Hannah. The application of the misfit model examines how these two characters attribute the religious category to Hannah's childlessness. Often, exegetes use the religious category to assert that Hannah's infertility results from God's inaction. For instance, James E. Smith contends that "the words the Lord had closed her womb serve as... an implicit claim to inspiration (for who but the Lord could reveal such a fact) and... signal that God was at work behind the scenes."²⁹ Smith's interpretation supports the religious category. It makes Hannah's childlessness a part of a divine plan. However, subjugated knowledge does not accept this religious argument. It maintains that the discrimination of infertility is the result of cultural norms. Applied to verses 5 and 6, the misfit model shows that the religious argument originates in the minds of two characters. In verse 5, Elkanah is said to give Hannah a portion "because YHWH closed her womb." In the following verse, Peninnah also provokes Hannah "because YHWH sealed her womb." Both verses use almost the exact same phrase to describe Hannah's infertility. Verse 6 adds the preposition **בַּעַד**.³⁰ At first glance, this repetition appears superfluous. The narrative adds nothing by repeating the same phrase in two consecutive verses. However, by stressing cultural expectations, the characteristic of subjugated knowledge demonstrates that Elkanah and Peninnah use this religious argument to

²⁸ Leah Scully, *Disability Bioethics: Moral Bodies, Moral Difference* (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 128.

²⁹ James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Joplin, MO: 2000), 41.

³⁰ Verse 6 includes the preposition **בַּעַד** to emphasize that God closed Hannah's womb entirely. As noted in the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, the preposition **בַּעַד** is an idiom when combined with verbs that denote shutting or closing. The BDB specifically identifies 1 Sam. 1:6, suggesting the translation "to seal up." See, F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (reprint; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 126.

justify their actions. The conjunction כִּי “because” is central to this interpretation. The term does not refer to the cause of Hannah’s infertility but the cultural reasoning Elkanah and Peninnah use to discriminate against Hannah. The conjunction functions as an internal monologue for the two characters. Thus, subjugated knowledge rejects the religious explanation for Hannah’s infertility. It shows that Elkanah and Peninnah employ this argument to legitimize Hannah’s marginalization.

The application of subjugated knowledge to 1 Samuel 1 challenges the religious arguments used to articulate the reason for Hannah’s childlessness. It rejects the symbolic interpretation of Hannah’s involuntary childlessness, and reframes her suffering as an issue of infertility, as opposed to the suffering of Israel. Subjugated knowledge thus counters the religious category by recognizing that the experience of infertility is important to the interpretation of this story. This characteristic of the misfit model also criticizes Elkanah’s and Peninnah’s discrimination of Hannah’s childlessness. It shows their argument, that God causes Hannah’s infertility, is a cultural assumption. This interpretative move critiques conventional interpretations that sympathize with Elkanah and Peninnah in their response to Hannah’s infertility. Read accordingly, Elkanah’s love for Hannah “appears self-serving and penurious.”³¹ Similarly, Peninnah’s provocation toward Hannah must be understood as the cultural-literary mandate to reproduce. Thus, the application of the second characteristic of the misfit model—subjugated knowledge—critiques the cultural motivations that characters of 1 Samuel 1 express toward Hannah. In sum, subjugated knowledge highlights Hannah’s experience, rather than the symbolic importance of her childlessness, and uncovers the discrimination of her infertility in this story.

³¹ John Petersen, *Reading Women’s Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 41.

5.3 The Enacted Model: Explicit Stigmatization of Infertility and No Overt Discrimination

The enacted model stresses the explicit discrimination of infertility. It describes how women's childlessness leads to status loss, community expulsion, divorce, polygamy, and emotional or physical abuse. Disability and feminist biblical scholars employ the enacted model, albeit not in name, to analyze the overt discrimination of biblical infertility. These interpreters explain that the stigmatization of biblical childlessness is linked to socioeconomic or patriarchal pressure to reproduce. The section proceeds in two parts. The first part analyzes disability and feminist interpretations that highlight the explicit discrimination of infertility. It shows that the enacted model contributes to these exegetical interpretations. The second part explains that the enacted model does not adequately describe the stigmatization of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. It discusses why the enacted model should be replaced with the felt model in the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1.

5.3.1 Explicit Stigmatization: Biblical Infertility in Disability and Feminist Biblical Exegesis

The enacted model expands the exegetical interpretations of biblical infertility offered by disability and feminist scholars. This model investigates the overt discrimination of childlessness carried out on a cultural level. It highlights different types of sociocultural marginalization associated with the stigmatization of infertility, including physical and emotional abuse. Although disability and feminist biblical scholars do not recognize the enacted model, they often emphasize the social stigmatization of infertility. They address many of the same concerns regarding the explicit denigration of infertile women. Thus, the enacted model is an excellent conversation partner with disability and feminist biblical scholarship on infertility. It provides a framework to analyze the explicit discrimination of childlessness in biblical literature.

Disability scholars have long struggled with the overt stigmatization of infertility as a disability. For instance, Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden recognize that “the stigmatization of childlessness stems from the perception—and the codification of this perception in popular rhetoric—that having children is ‘natural.’”³² They examine a variety of biblical narratives on infertility, covering Genesis through the eschaton, to show the prevalence of the overt discrimination of biblical childlessness. Moss and Baden stress that the social stigma attached to infertility finds “expression through the attitudes and voices of the narrative antagonists.”³³ They show that these characters speak to the explicit stigmatization of childlessness. Still, Moss and Baden maintain a certain level of hope. They suggest that readers “need not be beholden to the normative stance. [They] can affirm instead the values embedded in and prompted by the matriarchal narratives themselves.”³⁴ Put another way, Moss and Baden directly critique the enacted stigmatization of infertility, proposing that biblical scholars reject the overt discrimination of childlessness in biblical literature.

Feminist exegetes also readily recognize the overt stigmatization of infertility. For example, Esther Fuchs stresses that biblical narratives “stigmatiz[e] natural barrenness [*sic*]... [to] suggest that mothers give birth not because of but rather despite their natural deficiencies.”³⁵ She argues that biblical texts are the product of patriarchal ideology and are effectively used to control the lives of women. As Fuchs notes: “The emphasis on woman’s *inability* to give birth... undermine[s] the potential political claims of mothers over their progeny, and mothers’ potential claim to equity with and independence from the control of fathers.”³⁶ Thus, Fuchs maintains that

³² Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden, “Conclusion,” in *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 231.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*, 64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

biblical narratives on infertility stress the conditional procreative abilities of mothers to legitimize the political power of fathers. By overtly stigmatizing infertility, patriarchal society ensures its survival without ceding control to women.

Disability and feminist biblical scholars focus on the overt discrimination of infertility. Their research offers a well-grounded explanation for the stigmatization of childlessness in biblical literature. Exegetes often highlight overt stigma to critique power structures and characters that discriminate against infertile women. For Moss and Baden, the stigmatization of childlessness is carried through the voices of various biblical antagonists. They refer specifically to Hagar and Peninnah as key figures who advance the explicit discrimination of infertility. Fuchs employs the enacted model to discuss the patriarchal influence over female reproduction. She references the stigma of female infertility to show that ancient Israelite society effectively controlled female bodies. She also argues that men used the conditional nature of women's procreativity to undermine their claim to social and political autonomy. In short, disability and feminist scholars use the enacted model, in all but name, to analyze biblical infertility. The application of the model to biblical narratives thus expands the discussion on the explicit stigmatization of childlessness.

5.3.2 Enacted Model and 1 Samuel 1: No Overt Stigmatization of Hannah's Infertility

In many cases, the enacted model outlines the discrimination of biblical infertility. However, the model falters in some narratives. 1 Samuel 1 does not depict the explicit stigmatization of Hannah's childlessness. It does include an account of polygamous marriage, a result of enacted stigmatization. However, the overt stigma of Hannah's involuntary childlessness occurs before the narrative begins. In this story, Hannah's stigmatization relates to her tenuous social position within the family. As Marcia C. Inhorn notes: "[T]he infertile

woman's position... in a polygynous marriage [is] one of the worst possible structural positions for a woman to occupy."³⁷ Although we must be careful of drawing too broad a conclusion, Inhorn signals that polygamy resolves the economic pressure to reproduce but not the stigma of infertility. Accordingly, 1 Samuel 1 describes a different type of stigma related to childlessness. This section explores how biblical scholars unsuccessfully place Hannah's infertility under the enacted model. It then shows that the stigmatization of her childlessness falls under the felt model of infertility.

Disability and feminist biblical scholars explain that 1 Samuel 1 describes the overt stigmatization of Hannah's childlessness. In his interpretation of Hannah's story, Joel S. Baden outlines the social expectations to procreate. He explains that the "Israelite economy and custom effectively demanded offspring. A family could survive neither literally nor figuratively without children to sustain it."³⁸ Similarly, Laurel Koepf-Taylor asserts that "[t]he economic value of children in the ancient world renders them a necessity rather than an emotional luxury. Hence, childlessness is a form of economic hardship and threat to communal survival in addition to a personal tragedy."³⁹ Both Koepf-Taylor and Baden frame the stigma of Hannah's infertility as a familial issue of survival. They stress that the discrimination of Hannah's childlessness relates to economic necessity and patrilineal legacy. In different ways, both scholars show that Hannah's infertility leads to her social stigmatization.

Although disability and feminist scholars contend that Hannah encounters explicit stigmatization, 1 Samuel 1 does not fall under the enacted model. Three different verses drive

³⁷ Marcia C. Inhorn, *Infertility and Patriarchy: The Cultural Politics of Gender and Family Life in Egypt* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 119-120.

³⁸ Baden, "The Matriarchs as Models," 29-30.

³⁹ Laurel Koepf-Taylor, *Give Me Children or I Shall Die: Children and Communal Survival in Biblical Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 43.

home this point. First, verse 2 eliminates the explicit stigmatization of Hannah's infertility by stating that Peninnah gave birth to Elkanah's children. With the family line secure, Hannah does not encounter any economic pressure to reproduce for the benefit of Elkanah or pronatalist society. Second, verse 8 shows that Hannah does not encounter any societal pressure to become pregnant. In fact, Elkanah explicitly states that he does not care whether Hannah is a mother. The narrative thus removes the explicit societal stigmatization of Hannah's infertility. Third, verse 28 shows that even when Hannah does give birth to her son, she counters the reason for the explicit stigmatization of infertility. She does not keep her child as an important economic asset for the family. Rather, she hands him over to Eli the priest. As Koepf-Taylor observes: "This timing is significant in light of children's economic value in the ancient world in that... the age of three is the beginning of the child's usefulness as a laborer."⁴⁰ In short, Peninnah's children, Elkanah's statement, and Hannah's gift of her child to the temple illustrate that her infertility is not a socioeconomic issue. The stigmatization of Hannah's infertility in 1 Samuel 1 does not relate to economic necessity and patrilineal legacy; it goes beyond the overt cultural stigmatization of infertility.

The enacted model does not adequately describe the stigmatization of Hannah's involuntary childlessness in 1 Samuel 1. Scholars, such as Baden and Koepf-Taylor, claim that this story is an example of explicit stigmatization. However, the narrative eliminates the reasons—patrilineal legacy and economic survival—that would lead to Hannah's overt discrimination. Nevertheless, eliminating explicit stigmatization does not preclude the possibility of implicit stigmatization. In fact, by highlighting that infertility is a familial issue, Baden and Koepf-Taylor touch on the alternative to the enacted model. The felt model moves away from

⁴⁰ Ibid., 45.

Hannah's overt economic stigmatization and instead underscores her familial discrimination. It demonstrates that the stigma of her childlessness relates to Hannah's spoiled identity and the invisibility of her disability. In sum, Hannah's childlessness is not an economic issue for Elkanah who has children of his own. Rather, it signifies that the stigma of infertility changes after patrilineal legacy is secured through polygamous marriage. The stigma of childlessness is not problematic for men like Elkanah but for infertile women like Hannah.

5.4 The Felt Model: Spoiled Identity and Hidden Disability

The felt model offers another way to understand the stigmatization of Hannah's infertility in 1 Samuel 1. This model emphasizes that the stigma of childlessness does not require overt discrimination. Rather, it takes multiple forms, including familial or self-stigmatization. The felt model shows that infertile women are not always stigmatized in public spaces. It relates to women's (and some men's) spoiled identities. Said differently, the felt model explains that cultural norms upheld by family members leads to the stigmatization of infertility. Applied to 1 Samuel 1, the felt model highlights two different characteristics. It first centers on Hannah's spoiled identity. This characteristic illustrates that Elkanah, Peninnah, and even Hannah believe that she occupies a socially-unacceptable position—a childless woman. These characters stigmatize Hannah's infertility on the basis of the cultural expectation that biblical women must reproduce. Second, the felt model also explores the invisibility of Hannah's infertility. It explains that Hannah's childlessness is mostly hidden from the larger community because her family already has children. It also investigates how Hannah passes as able-bodied to avoid her felt stigma from becoming an enacted stigma. She hides her childlessness to evade the cultural stigmatization of her infertility. In these two ways, the felt model provides an alternative to the

overt stigma often attached to 1 Samuel 1. It recognizes that the discrimination of Hannah's childlessness originates in the home and does not lead to public discrimination.

5.4.1 Spoiled Identity: Familial and Personal Stigmatization of Hannah's Infertility

The felt stigmatization of Hannah's infertility relies on the characteristic of a spoiled identity. It stresses that familial groups enforce cultural norms. They take a socially undesirable "state of affairs—infertility, blindness, epilepsy, leprosy," and treat it as a "taboo behavior."⁴¹ Accordingly, Hannah's spoiled identity does not require explicit societal stigmatization. In fact, her condition remains hidden from the general populace. Rather, it is the expectation that Hannah must become a mother that causes Peninnah, Elkanah, and even Hannah to stigmatize her infertility. In short, the felt model moves from an analysis of explicit societal stigmatization to an analysis of cultural norms, personal, and household discrimination.

Hannah's spoiled identity results in two different types of felt stigmatization. The first is familial discrimination. In verse 6, Peninnah provokes Hannah for her childlessness in the context of a communal family meal. More specifically, she goads Hannah because God closed her womb. The conjunction כִּי "because" in this verse links Peninnah's provocation to the cultural-literary conviction that childlessness is an undesirable state caused by God. Peninnah employs this religious argument to stigmatize Hannah's infertility. Likewise, two verses later Elkanah rebukes Hannah for not participating in the family meal. His chastisement refers directly to "ten sons" (v. 8), and Elkanah offers himself as a surrogate for Hannah's maternal affection. More importantly, Elkanah's reproach also refers to the religious argument for Hannah's infertility. He legitimizes his response to Hannah's involuntary childlessness by referencing the cultural conviction that attributes infertility to God's inaction. In short, Peninnah's and Elkanah's

⁴¹ Arthur L. Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant: Infertile Couples in Contemporary America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 55.

reactions to Hannah's spoiled identity represent two different types of familial discrimination. Peninnah offers a mocking rebuke that insults Hannah's childlessness. Elkanah is well-meaning but reinforces the normalcy of fertility. He stigmatizes Hannah even though he is trying to help. Thus, both Elkanah and Peninnah employ a religious explanation for infertility, accepted in the cultural-literary context of 1 Samuel 1, to discriminate Hannah's infertility.

The second type of discrimination associated with a spoiled identity is self-stigmatization. Often, this form of stigma relates to social conditioning. It arises from the social pressure to reproduce, the normalization of motherhood, and familial discrimination. In 1 Samuel 1, Hannah's stigmatization occurs within a household context, at a meal with her family rather than a public location. Further, her failure to achieve the expected role of motherhood is brought up "year after year" (v. 7). The repeated familial discrimination of Hannah's infertility are reminders of her non-normative status. They shape Hannah's perception, as she is "labeled, stereotyped, [and] isolated from/by others" because of her childlessness.⁴² In response, Hannah refuses to eat, and she separates herself by not actively participating in the yearly ritual (v. 7). She only relents after Elkanah's rebuke. Even then, after eating, Hannah physically removes herself from the table (v. 9). Thus, familial discrimination causes Hannah to engage in self-stigmatization. She internalizes the spoiled identity based on her reproductive status. Hannah then verbally and physically separates herself from her family.

In sum, verses 6 through 9 establish that the stigmatization of infertility in 1 Samuel 1 is not explicit but based on Hannah's spoiled identity. Peninnah and Elkanah stigmatize Hannah because of their understanding of normative motherhood and the religious basis of Hannah's infertility. They react to Hannah's childlessness in different ways. Still, both base their responses

⁴² Elizabeth A. Sternke and Kathleen Abrahamson, "Perception of Women with Infertility on Stigma and Disability," *Sexuality and Disability* 33 (2015): 5.

on the cultural conviction that God closed her womb. Furthermore, Hannah internalizes her spoiled identity. She engages in self-stigmatization by refusing to eat and removing herself from the family meal. These different forms of stigmatization do not derive from the overt societal discrimination of Hannah's childlessness. They do not arise from social exclusion, abuse, divorce, or marginalization. Rather, Hannah's felt stigma is the result of cultural expectations that shape her spoiled identity. Hannah, Peninnah, and Elkanah all respond to the cultural norms that classify female infertility as a significant problem in biblical literature. In short, Hannah's spoiled identity leads to unique but interrelated forms of stigmatization. It is seen through Elkanah's and Peninnah's yearly chastisement which causes Hannah's personal isolation.

5.4.2 A Hidden Disability: Hannah's Infertility as an "Invisible" Disability

Another characteristic of the felt model is the invisible stigma of infertility. This characteristic describes how infertile individuals sometimes conceal their childlessness in an effort to prevent felt stigmatization from becoming enacted stigmatization. Applied to 1 Samuel 1, the invisibility of Hannah's infertility allows her to navigate public spaces, including the temple at Shiloh, without encountering overt discrimination. However, her interactions with other characters must maintain this anonymity, in case the implicit stigma of her childlessness becomes explicit. Put another way, the disclosure of Hannah's infertility creates the opportunity for cultural stigmatization. Or as Elizabeth Sternke suggests: "Once infertility issues have been discovered or disclosed the stigma associated with this identity must be managed in some form or other."⁴³ The transmutable nature of infertility, its ability to shift or change from felt to enacted, causes Hannah to hide her involuntary childlessness from those outside her family.

⁴³ Elizabeth Anne Sternke, "Unruly Bodies: Infertility as a Disability" (PhD diss., Purdue University, 2010), 13.

The hidden nature of Hannah's infertility takes center stage in her conversation with Eli. In verse 9, Hannah rises up after the family meal to visit the temple, moving the narrative from a familial context to a public context. Accordingly, the narrative shifts from felt to (possible) enacted stigmatization. The discovery of Hannah's infertile status would lead to further castigation on a public level. However, no societal reprimand occurs. Instead, Eli rebukes Hannah for her drunkenness (v. 14). In response, Hannah references her "numerous complaints and grief" (v. 16). Both characters avoid discussing Hannah's childlessness. Eli does not broach the topic because of his ignorance. Hannah sidesteps the subject on purpose. Scholars rarely explain why Hannah does not state outright that she is childless. Some, like Robert Alter, suggest that this encounter foreshadows the transfer of power from Eli's family to Samuel.⁴⁴ The felt model offers an alternative interpretation. Hannah is calculative. Having internalized her spoiled identity, Hannah recognizes her non-normative cultural status. She does not disclose her infertility to Eli and thereby she avoids the overt stigmatization of her childlessness. In short, Hannah passes.⁴⁵ She maintains the invisibility of her infertility in order to achieve her goal of a blessing.

In sum, Hannah's conversation with Eli establishes that the invisibility of her infertility augments her social status in the Israelite community. The characteristic of Hannah's hidden disability also explains why she conceals her identity as an infertile woman. It shows that even when childless individuals are not overtly marginalized in public, the fear of a felt stigma becoming an enacted stigma leads some women to hide their condition. Likewise, Hannah avoids overt discrimination by maintaining the invisibility of her disability. This characteristic of the felt

⁴⁴ See, e.g., his analysis of the "distortion" of the annunciation type scene in Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 243. For my detailed discussion see Chapter 2 Section 2.3.3.

⁴⁵ Alternatively, Hannah's hypothetical decision to tell Eli the truth "involves a risk," because he "may not prove supportive and understanding." See, Greil, *Not Yet Pregnant*, 138.

model speaks to a different type of discrimination—one that may not be discrediting, or overt, but certainly is discreditable. Hannah’s efforts to avoid disclosing her infertility demonstrate the close relationship between felt and enacted forms of stigmatization. In short, the invisibility of Hannah’s infertility is tenuous. She uses her hidden status as a childless woman to augment her social position within the Israelite community.

5.5 Applying the Four Social-Scientific Models to Hannah’s Infertility: A Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that a hermeneutic of reproduction employs four different social-scientific models to offer a complex interpretation of Hannah’s infertility in 1 Samuel 1. The social constructionist model underscores the importance of cultural contexts regarding the discrimination of infertility. In 1 Samuel 1, this model focuses on Hannah’s social role expectations. It shows that her efforts to conceive follow the cultural-literary emphasis on motherhood. The social constructionist model also stresses the stratified reproduction between Hannah, Peninnah, and Elkanah. This characteristic highlights the social privileges fecund women have in the biblical story, leading to Hannah’s marginalization. The misfit model offers an analysis of Hannah’s infertility that focuses on the relationship between the experience of childlessness and cultural norms. It expands on disability biblical scholarship, which emphasizes the cultural evaluation of infertility, by refocusing on the discrepancy between the cultural norms and the discrimination of childlessness. The misfit model also incorporates subjugated knowledge into the investigation of Hannah’s infertility. It shows that the religious categorization of infertility legitimates Elkanah’s and Peninnah’s treatment of Hannah in the narrative. The enacted model relates to the overt discrimination of involuntary childlessness by pronatalist societies. It has proven popular among social scientists as well as biblical scholars. However, in the context of 1 Samuel 1, the enacted model proves insufficient to explain the

stigma of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. The felt model offers a new way to understand the stigma of Hannah's infertility. It emphasizes Hannah's spoiled identity which leads to familial discrimination and self-stigmatization. The felt model also underscores the invisibility of Hannah's childlessness in the context of 1 Samuel 1. It explores how Hannah's interaction with Eli the priest demonstrates the close relationship between the enacted and felt models of infertility.

The social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models contribute to an interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 that is grounded in the experience of infertility. They expand on disability and feminist exegesis on Hannah's story. They also offer a strong critique of the economic and religious interpretations of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. The social constructionist and misfit models expound on the conceptualization and discrimination of Hannah's infertility. They show that Hannah's condition is a social construction or "misfit" in a narrative that values female fecundity. They explain that the cultural-literary context shapes the conceptualization of Hannah's childlessness. The enacted and felt models complexify the types of stigmatization associated with biblical infertility. The two models show that the stigma of childlessness is observable on societal, familial, and individual levels. Thus, the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models move beyond an interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 that centers on economic or religious considerations. The application of all four models establishes Hannah as a central character and identifies infertility as an important locus of scholarly analysis and biblical meaning. The application of the models bring together the research of disability and feminist biblical scholars. It even creates a conversation between biblical scholarship and social-scientific studies on infertility. In short, the four models recognize the complexity of Hannah's infertility in

1 Samuel 1. Together, they offer an interpretation that is based on Hannah's conceptualization, stigmatization, and the eventual alleviation of her involuntary childlessness.

6. A Biblical Hermeneutic of Reproduction and Infertility: A Conclusion

This study addresses the conceptualization and stigmatization of Hannah's infertility in 1 Samuel 1. It challenges the ideological presentation of biblical childlessness by employing the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models. The application of the four models critiques the exegetical discrimination of Hannah's childlessness "through the analysis of metaphors, images, and all representations of disability in the academic and popular cultures."¹ The study examines historical and literary interpretation of Hannah's infertility and it applies a hermeneutic of reproduction to 1 Samuel 1. It critiques the normalization of female fertility, the discrimination and marginalization of infertile women, and the stigmatization of Hannah's childlessness as articulated in exegetical treatments from the 1970s to the present.

Applying the hermeneutic of reproduction to Hannah's infertility shapes the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1 in four ways. First, the social constructionist model reframes Hannah's childlessness as an issue of social status. Her characterization expounds on the implied value of female fecundity. Thus, Elkanah and Peninnah discriminate against Hannah because of her childlessness. Second, the misfit model redefines Hannah's infertility as a problem related to cultural norms. It highlights the discrepancy between Hannah's involuntary childlessness and the cultural-literary expectation that she must become pregnant. The application of the misfit model questions the validity of Hannah's exclusion by centering on her subjugated knowledge. Third, the enacted model emphasizes the overt discrimination of female infertility. It shows that

¹ Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998), 142.

childlessness is often a public issue in pronatalist societies. Fourth, the felt model explains that characters in 1 Samuel 1 stigmatize Hannah for her childlessness. The application of the model stresses familial and personal discrimination and explores the invisibility of Hannah's infertility.

Three sections structure the conclusion. The first section discusses key observations of the exegetical works on 1 Samuel 1 published in the last fifty years. It highlights the continued emphasis on economic and religious categories in the analysis of Hannah's infertility, and it underscores the need for a hermeneutic of reproduction. The second section examines the benefits of a hermeneutic of reproduction. It explains that the four models contribute to a scientifically-grounded interpretation of Hannah's infertility. The third section highlights other narratives that benefit from a hermeneutic of reproduction. It proposes that the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models should be applied to biblical texts that address infertility, child-loss, and voluntary childlessness.

6.1 Key Observations of Selected Exegetical Works: Interpretations of 1 Samuel 1

In the last five decades, biblical scholars writing on 1 Samuel 1 have often emphasized the economic or religious categorization of Hannah's infertility. Both historical-critics and literary exegetes employ the categories in their analyses of Hannah's childlessness. Historical-critical scholars use the economic category to underscore the importance of children to the survival of the ancient Israelite community. They also employ the religious category to create a link between Hannah's infertility and the dawn of the Israelite monarchy. Likewise, literary critics stress the economic survival of Elkanah's family. They use the economic model to understand Elkanah's polygamous marriage and Hannah's desire for a child. Literary exegetes also employ the religious category to investigate the religious symbolism of Hannah's childlessness. Like their historical-critical colleagues, literary scholars center their interpretation

on the religious importance of Hannah's infertility to the entire Israelite community. This overlap between historical-critical and literary interpretations of Hannah's childlessness underscores the exegetical stagnation in the last few decades. Even though historical-critics offer a historical reconstruction of ancient Israel and literary theorists provide an analysis of the text itself, none of them emphasize Hannah's perspective, her discrimination, or the stigmatization of her infertility. Instead, biblical interpretations on involuntary childlessness favor economic and theologizing evaluations.

Just as historical-critical and literary biblical scholarship emphasizes the economic and religious categories, disability interpretations of 1 Samuel 1 employ these two categories. Admittedly, disability scholars broaden the analysis of this story by conceptualizing Hannah's infertility as a disability. They emphasize Hannah's able-bodiedness in connection to her childlessness. Further, they explore the stigmatization of infertility in this text, by stressing that Hannah's disability shapes her discrimination. Even so, disability exegetes highlight the religious claim that God causes infertility to explain Hannah's disability. Other disability scholars underscore the economic aspect of Hannah's infertility to elucidate her marginalization. In short, disability biblical interpreters center on the conceptualization and discrimination of Hannah's infertility. They do not critique the economic and religious categories, but they use them to speculate about the ancient Israelite worldview of disability. Disability exegetes thus continue to uphold the economic and religious categories that dominate the historical-critical and literary interpretation of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. None of them challenge the economic and religious conceptualizations of infertility in 1 Samuel 1.

Likewise, feminist biblical scholars employ the economic and religious categories in their interpretation of Hannah's infertility. These exegetes focus on Hannah's gender and often

critique patriarchal ideology that normalizes motherhood, the discrimination of Hannah's infertility, and even her efforts to become pregnant. Depatriarchalizing exegetes coopt the economic and religious arguments to offer symbolic or historicized interpretations of biblical childlessness. They critique patriarchal ideology while simultaneously employing the economic and religious categories to describe Hannah's experience. Rejectionist interpreters overtly criticize 1 Samuel 1 as an androcentric narrative. They contend that the story does not include a unique feminine presence. Rather, the narrative fosters patriarchal interests and the rule of the father by describing a woman adhering to patriarchal ideology. In short, depatriarchalizing and rejectionist feminist scholars do not move beyond the economic or religious analysis of Hannah's infertility. Either they adopt the economic or religious categories to show the unique female presence or they reject the categories and the biblical narrative altogether.

Notably, scholarship on 1 Samuel 1 of the last five decades has not engaged social-scientific scholarship on infertility. Historical-critical, literary, disability, and feminist exegetes continue to rely on the economic and religious categories in their reading of Hannah's story. The hermeneutic of reproduction offers a way forward. It employs the four models developed by social scientists to deepen the understanding of Hannah's infertility. The social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models challenge the economic and religious categories and they offer different ways of interpreting biblical infertility. When the models are applied, they emphasize the cultural-literary conceptualization of infertility in 1 Samuel 1. They also differentiate between the overt and felt stigmatization of Hannah's childlessness. In sum, a hermeneutic of reproduction relies on scientifically-grounded models on infertility that complexify the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. The hermeneutic of reproduction contends that Hannah's

marginalization and stigmatization constitute the center of analysis. It fosters a reading of Hannah's story that is not based on economic or religious explanations.

6.2 The Benefits of the Hermeneutic of Reproduction: The Four Models and Hannah's Infertility

The hermeneutic of reproduction provides multiple advantages to the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. Most importantly, the hermeneutic of reproduction relies on social-scientific scholarship on infertility, offering a scientifically-grounded approach to analyzing Hannah's involuntary childlessness. The hermeneutic of reproduction thus moves beyond the economic and religious categories. It replaces the economic and religious categories with four models—the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models—that outline the conceptualization and stigmatization of Hannah's involuntary childlessness. Further, the hermeneutic of reproduction is interdisciplinary, putting biblical studies in conversation with scholars who write on infertility. It recognizes that biblical scholarship on involuntary childlessness does not operate in a vacuum. Rather, biblical exegesis benefits by engaging the latest theories and models on infertility. In short, the hermeneutic of reproduction brings biblical scholarship on infertility into the twenty-first century. It emphasizes scientific models for understanding childlessness and engages in an interdisciplinary dialogue on the conceptualization and stigmatization of infertility.

Another benefit of the hermeneutic of reproduction is the expansion of biblical vocabulary. Often biblical scholars refer to Hannah's "barrenness" in their interpretations of 1 Samuel 1. Relying on outdated terminology, they denigrate both biblical and contemporary individuals facing involuntary childlessness. To address this issue, the hermeneutic of reproduction adopts the terms employed by social scientists, identifying Hannah's "infertility" or "involuntary childlessness." Further, the terms used by social scientists help differentiate between variations of infertility. It recognizes, for instance, the difference between involuntary

childlessness and voluntary childlessness. The distinction between both concepts is important, but it is not adequately conveyed through the antiquarian term “barren.” In short, the hermeneutic of reproduction adopts social-scientific terminology that addresses variations in the experience of infertility and does not malign those who identify as involuntary childless.

The hermeneutic of reproduction has yet another benefit. It utilizes the four models to refocus exegetical interpretations onto Hannah’s infertility. The social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models emphasize neither the economics of ancient Israelite society nor the religious argument that God causes female infertility. Rather, they center on Hannah’s perspective. The models thus challenge the stereotype of infertility, critiques family members who discriminate against Hannah, and underscores Hannah’s stigmatization. Accordingly, the hermeneutic of reproduction expands both disability and feminist interpretations by encouraging the inclusion of social-scientific scholarship in the reading of 1 Samuel 1. The hermeneutic of reproduction centers on the cultural-literary conceptualization of Hannah’s childlessness. It also differentiates between the explicit and implicit stigma of infertility. In short, the hermeneutic of reproduction leads biblical scholars to rethink the interpretation of Hannah’s infertility.

Finally, the hermeneutic of reproduction benefits scholarship on 1 Samuel 1 by teaching people to read the Bible in a non-prejudicial manner. As religious convictions shape the contemporary understanding of infertility, biblical scholars must be prepared to address people’s questions on involuntary childlessness. The hermeneutic of reproduction offers an approach to 1 Samuel 1 that does not advance stereotypical views about infertility. It challenges the religious argument that God causes childlessness. Informed by contemporary research on infertility, the hermeneutic of reproduction grounds the interpretation of the story in a social-scientific view about involuntary childlessness. In this way, the hermeneutic of reproduction challenges the

detrimental understanding of infertility that attributes childlessness to God. It counters this religious argument by uplifting stories in the Hebrew Bible that address the discrimination and stigmatization of infertility.

In sum, the hermeneutic of reproduction offer many advantages to the interpretation of biblical infertility in 1 Samuel 1. The hermeneutic of reproduction provides a scientifically-grounded approach that brings biblical scholarship into conversation with the social-sciences. It moves beyond an analysis of Hannah's childlessness based on economic or religious considerations. Further, the hermeneutic of reproduction utilizes contemporary terminology that differentiates between variations of infertility and does not discriminate against childless individuals. The hermeneutic of reproduction thus reaffirms Hannah's centrality to the interpretation of 1 Samuel 1. It underscores Hannah's infertility and her stigmatization rather than the economic or religious explanations for her childlessness. Finally, the hermeneutic of reproduction addresses the contemporary discrimination of infertility. It rejects the theological claim that childlessness is the result of sin, brokenness, or failure. It recognizes that the Hebrew Bible contains numerous stories that encapsulate the experiences of involuntary childlessness, child-loss, and the stigmatization of infertility. Finally, the hermeneutic of reproduction deepens the understanding of Hannah's infertility by offering a different way to analyze childlessness in 1 Samuel 1.

6.3 A Hermeneutic of Reproduction and Biblical Infertility: Future Areas of Research

The hermeneutic of reproduction broadens the scholarly understanding of biblical infertility. The application of the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models to biblical narratives moves beyond the economic and religious categories and centers on the discrimination of childlessness. 1 Samuel 1 is only one example of biblical infertility in the Hebrew Bible. Accordingly, the hermeneutic of reproduction can also be applied to numerous

other narratives about various forms of childlessness. This section gives four specific examples for future areas of research. They include texts about female infertility, biblical surrogacy, male infertility, and LGBTQ infertility.

6.3.1 Female Infertility: Genesis 25; 29-30; Judges 13; 2 Samuel 6; and 2 Kings 4

Numerous biblical narratives address the issue of female infertility in the Hebrew Bible. The hermeneutic of reproduction has much to contribute to these texts. It highlights variations in the conceptualization of infertility. It also addresses the different ways childless women are stigmatized in biblical narratives. Among the infertile women are Rebekah (Genesis 25), Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29-30), Samson's mother (Judges 13), Michal (2 Samuel 6), and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4).

The social-scientific models that are the foundation of the hermeneutic of reproduction focus on different features in each narrative. For example, the social constructionist model stresses the stratified reproduction in biblical texts. It underscores the dynamic between wives in polygamous marriages, such as Leah and Rachel, who adhere to normative social role expectations. The misfit model focuses on the religious claim that God causes women's infertility. This claim appears in multiple narratives, including Genesis 25, Judges 13, and 2 Kings 4. The application of the misfit model shows that infertile women encounter the religious argument that God causes their childlessness. Finally, the enacted and felt models center on the overt and hidden stigmatization of infertility. For instance, they illustrate that Michal does not encounter explicit discrimination against her infertility. The models raise the possibility that Michal's social status allows her to be a voluntary childless woman. According to this reading, Michal does not want to have children with her husband David. In short, the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models elaborate on the conceptualization and

stigmatization of biblical infertility while they also bring attention to the cultural-literary discrimination of biblical childlessness.

6.3.2 *Biblical Infertility and Surrogacy: Genesis 16*

In recent decades, social-scientific scholarship on infertility has focused on assisted reproductive technologies or ARTs.² These technologies include in vitro fertilization, sperm injection, cryopreservation of eggs and embryos, and even gestational surrogacy. Although ARTs have little relation to biblical studies, sometimes commercial surrogacy organizations refer to biblical stories to legitimize the contemporary practice of surrogacy. For example, Susan Lewis Cooper and Ellen Sarasohn Glazer write:

Surrogacy history begins with Abraham and Sarah, the first known infertile couple.... Abraham's decision to follow his wife's advice and to have her handmaiden bear his child provided a solution to their childlessness. Hagar, history's first-known surrogate mother, conceived and gave birth to Abraham's first son, Ishmael.³

Consequently, the hermeneutic of reproduction contributes to academic conversations about surrogacy. It helps biblical exegetes analyze the conceptualization and potential stigmatization leading to the practice of surrogacy in biblical literature.

One example of a biblical narrative that addresses the practice of surrogacy is Genesis 16. In this story, Sarai orders Abram to reproduce by giving him her slave girl, Hagar. Biblical scholars have long questioned this account about slavery and surrogacy.⁴ Social-scientific

² See, e.g., Lori B. Andrews, "Surrogate Motherhood: The Challenge for Feminists," *Law, Medicine & Healthcare* 16 (1988): 72-80; Suze G. Berkhout, "Buns in the Oven: Objectification, Surrogacy, and Women's Autonomy," *Social Theory and Practice* 34 (2008): 95-117; Heather E. Dillaway, "Mothers for Others: A Race, Class, and Gender Analysis of Surrogacy," *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 34 (2008): 301-326; Helena Ragoné, "The Gift of Life: Surrogate Motherhood, Gamete Donation and Constructions of Altruism," in *Transformative Motherhood: On Giving and Getting in a Consumer Culture*, ed. Linda Layne (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1999).

³ Susan Lewis Cooper and Ellen Sarasohn Glazer, *Beyond Infertility: The New Paths to Parenthood* (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 1994), 260.

⁴ See, e.g., Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "Reproductive Capital and Slave Surrogacy: Thinking about/with/beyond Hagar," in *Bodies, Borders, and Believers: Ancient Texts and Present Conversations*, ed. Anne Hege Grung, Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, and Anna Rebecca Solevag (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015); Susanne Scholz, *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010); David A. Schones,

models of the hermeneutic of reproduction contribute to this critique. For example, the social constructionist model identifies the stratified reproduction between Sarai and Hagar. The racial and social disparity between the two women means that Sarai will receive a child whereas Hagar is forced into a sexual encounter. The enacted model explains why Sarai encourages Abram to have children through Hagar in the first place. It shows that having a child and heir removes the explicit stigmatization of Sarai's childlessness. In short, the social-scientific models complexify the interpretation of Genesis 16 by focusing on Hagar's exploitation and the discrimination of Sarai's infertility.

6.3.3 Male Infertility in the Bible: Genesis 20 and the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen)

Another area for future research is male infertility in the Hebrew Bible and extra-biblical literature. Admittedly, there are few narratives that attribute childlessness to men or even recognize the possibility of male infertility. As Joel S. Baden notes: "Though there are whispers of male infertility in the Hebrew Bible, they are decidedly shouted down by the standard ancient Near Eastern paradigm in which the woman was to blame."⁵ The hermeneutic of reproduction encourages a conversation on male infertility, showing that men can also be the cause of childlessness in biblical texts.

One example of male infertility or impotency is found in the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen). This narrative offers an account of Genesis 20, the story of Sarai and Abram in the foreign court. It expands on the biblical narrative, proposing that God makes the king infertile rather than his wives. The Genesis Apocryphon thus establishes that Sarai's son is the child of

"Buying Biblical Babies: Genesis 16 and Commercial Surrogacy," *Resonance: A Religious Studies Journal* 2 (2017): 1-17; Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (San Diego, CA: LuraMedia, 1988); Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993).

⁵ Joel S. Baden, "The Matriarchs as Models," in *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 38.

Abram. It also offers an ideological account of male impotency. By applying the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models to this story, the conceptualization and stigmatization of the king's infertility become a central feature. The story is no longer about Sarai's and Abram's childlessness and survival in a foreign land. Rather, it turns into an ideological depiction of foreign empires symbolized by male infertility.

6.3.4 *LGBTQ Infertility in the Bible: Ruth 1-4*

Still another avenue for future research is LGBTQ infertility and reproduction. This subject has been popularized in the social-sciences.⁶ Scholarship on LGBTQ infertility highlights the different experiences of childlessness among members of the community. It also establishes that cultural norms lead some LGBTQ individuals and couples reproduce. Since the hermeneutic of reproduction contributes to the analysis of infertility in all its forms, it should also address LGBTQ involuntary childlessness and neo-natal child-loss. The social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models outline the description of LGBTQ childlessness and the potential stigmatization of infertility.

One potential example of this type of analysis appears in the book of Ruth. Some scholars interpret this story from the perspective of queer theory.⁷ They contend that Ruth and Naomi represent an ideal lesbian couple, and present this story not as mother and daughter-in-law but as

⁶ See, e.g., Judith A. Burnett, "Use of Assisted Reproductive Technology and Gay and Lesbian Couples," *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling* 1 (2006): 115-125; Ellen Lewin, "On the Outside Looking in: The Politics of Lesbian Motherhood," in *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Iris Po Yee Lo, Celia H. Y. Chan, Timothy H. Y. Chan, "Perceived Importance of Childbearing and Attitudes Toward Assisted Reproductive Technology Among Chinese Lesbians in Hong Kong: Implications for Psychological Well-Being," *Fertility and Sterility* 106 no. 5 (2016): 1221-1229;

⁷ See, e.g., Rebecca Alpert, "Finding Our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation of the Book of Ruth," in *Rereading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*, ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1994); Tom Horner, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1978); Mona West, "Ruth," in *The Queer Bible Commentary*, ed. Deryn Guest, Robert E. Goss, Mona West, and Thomas Bohache (London: SCM, 2006).

unmarried women who “made up the story about Ruth...in order to protect their relationship.”⁸

The hermeneutic of reproduction refocuses the queer interpretation of this narrative. It underscores how childlessness plays an important role in Ruth and Naomi’s relationship. The hermeneutic of reproduction also establishes women’s role expectations in the cultural-literary context of the text by demanding that Ruth must become pregnant by the end of the story. Further, Ruth’s childlessness—and Naomi’s child-loss—lead to potential overt stigmatization. Boaz offers to protect Ruth as she gleans in the fields. Naomi also reminds Ruth that the end of the harvest creates new problems regarding the family’s economic survival. In short, the models of the hermeneutic of reproduction expand on the queer interpretation of the book of Ruth by centering on the conceptualization of Ruth’s infertility and the eventual conception of her child.

6.4 A Hermeneutic of Reproduction and Religious Studies: A Way Forward

Infertility affects 10% of the world’s population, over 48.5 million people. It is an experience shaped by culture, social norms, and religious convictions. Infertility narratives also impact the understanding of childlessness. Yet biblical scholarship on infertility is in its infancy. Grounded in social-scientific research on infertility, this study develops a hermeneutic of reproduction that analyzes the conceptualization and stigmatization of childlessness in 1 Samuel 1. It also applies the social constructionist, misfit, enacted, and felt models to the biblical story and so deepens the understanding of Hannah’s infertility. Still, this study is only one example of applying the hermeneutic of reproduction to one biblical text. Scholars should use the hermeneutic to analyze other biblical texts and even other religious traditions. Such work counters the stereotypical thinking about infertility. It exposes the discrimination, marginalization, and stigmatization of childlessness. Further, it provides positive examples of

⁸ Nancy Wilson, *Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1989), 156.

infertility in religious texts and traditions. Finally, the hermeneutic of reproduction counters social and religious role expectations that cause infertile people to blame themselves for their childlessness. In short, the hermeneutic of reproduction ensures that infertile and fertile people recognize the normalization of fertility, the discrimination, and the stigmatization of infertility. It suggests that these infertile people be accepted and welcomed for who they are, with or without children.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Biblical Commentaries on 1 Samuel 1

Ackroyd, Peter R. *The First Book of Samuel*. Cambridge Bible Commentary 10. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Alter, Robert. *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings a Translation with Commentary*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative: Revised and Updated*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011.

Alter, Robert. *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999.

Brueggemann, Walter. *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation 9. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990.

Burgh, Theodore W. "1-2 Samuel." In *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Hugh R. Page and Randall C. Bailey, 123-129. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010.

Chapman, Stephen B. *1 Samuel as Christian Scripture: A Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016.

Cooper, Derek, and Martin J. Lohrmann, eds. *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament V 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.

Esler, Philip E. *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Old Testament Narrative with its Ancient Audience*. Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2012.

Fokkelman, J. P. *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*. Vol. IV Vow and Desire 1 Sam. 1-12. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993.

Frolov, Serge. *The Turn of the Cycle: 1 Samuel 1-8 in Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004.

- Magennis, Feidhlimidh T. *First and Second Samuel*. New Collegeville Bible Commentary 8. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012.
- Mauchline, John. *1 and 2 Samuel*. London: Oliphants, 1971.
- McCarter, P. Kyle. *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 8. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1980.
- Miscall, Peter D. *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading*. Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Newsome, James D. *1 Samuel 2 Samuel: Knox Preaching Guides*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1983.
- Polzin, Robert. *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History: Part Two 1 Samuel*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1989.
- Pyper, Hugh S. "1, 2 Samuel." In *The Historical Writings: Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition*, ed. Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr., and Matthew J. M. Coomber, 361-400. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2016.
- Robinson, Gnana. *1 & 2 Samuel: Let Us Be Like the Nations*. International Theological Commentary 10. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993.
- Smith, James E. *1 & 2 Samuel*. Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co, 2000.
- Tsumura, David Toshio. *The First Book of Samuel*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007.
- Youngblood, Roland F. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Revised Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.

2. Biblical Studies Monographs, Journal Articles, Anthologies, Dictionaries, and Encyclopedias

- Ackerman, Susan. "Women in Ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Available online at: <http://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-45?print=pdf> [accessed on March 1, 2019].
- Alpert, Rebecca. "Finding Our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation of the Book of Ruth." In *Rereading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*, ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer, 91-96. New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1994.
- Avalos, Hector. *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995.

- Baab, O. J. "Barrenness." In *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Vol. 4, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, Thomas Samuel Kepler, John Knox, Herbert Gordon May, and Samuel Terrien, 358-359. New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1962.
- Baden, Joel S. "Be Fruitful and Multiply: The Dangers of Divine Blessing." *Communitas: Journal of Education Beyond the Walls* 14 (2018): 4-8.
- Baden, Joel S. "The Nature of Barrenness in the Hebrew Bible." In *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper, 13-28. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.
- Baden, Joel S., and Moss, Candida R. *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- The Bible and Culture Collective, "Ideological Criticism." In *The Postmodern Bible*, ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli, Stephen D. Moore, Gary A. Phillips, and Regina M. Schwartz, 272-308. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995.
- Brown, F., S. Driver, and C. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* reprint. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010.
- Callaway, Mary. *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979.
- Callaway, Mary. "Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash." PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1979.
- Carlebach, Alexander., and Judith Baskin. "Barrenness and Fertility." In *Encyclopedia Judaica 2nd edition*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 174-175. Detroit, MI: Macmillan, 2007.
- Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Vol. VI ט-פ. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007.
- Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Vol. VII ז-ג. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010.
- Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Vol. VIII ח-ה. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011.
- Crum, Terrelle B. "Barren." In *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, and John Rea, 205. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975.
- De-Whyte, Janice P. *Wom(b)an: A Cultural-Narrative Reading of the Hebrew Bible Barrenness Narratives*. Boston, MA: Brill, 2018.

- Exum, J. Cheryl. "'Mother in Israel': A Familiar Figure Reconsidered." In *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell, 73-85. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985.
- Exum, J. Cheryl. *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.
- Fewell, Danna Nolan, and David M. Gunn. *Gender, Power, & Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- Fewell, Danna Nolan. "Reading the Bible Ideologically: Feminist Criticism." In *To Each Its Own Meaning*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, 268-282. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- Fuchs, Esther. *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.
- Gafney, Wilda C. *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.
- Guest, Deryn. "From Gender Reversal to Genderfuck: Reading Jael through a Lesbian Lens." In *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Teresa J. Hornsby and Ken Stone, 9-44. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011.
- Hackett, Jo Ann. "1 and 2 Samuel." In *Women's Bible Commentary: Twentieth-Anniversary Edition Revised and Updated*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 150-163. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
- Havrelock, Rachel. "The Myth of Birthing the Hero: Heroic Barrenness in the Hebrew Bible." *Biblical Interpretation* 16 (2008): 154-78.
- Horner, Tom. *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1978.
- Jameson, Fredric. "A Conversation with Fredric Jameson." *Semeia* 59 (1992): 227-237.
- Junior, Nyasha, and Jeremy Schipper. "Disability Studies and the Bible." In *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner, 21-38. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013.
- Kartzow, Marianne Bjelland. "Reproductive Capital and Slave Surrogacy: Thinking about/with/beyond Hagar." In *Bodies, Borders, and Believers: Ancient Texts and Present Conversations*, ed. Anne Hege Grung, Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, and Anna Rebecca Solevag, 396-409. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015.

- Koepf-Taylor, Laurel. *Give Me Children or I Shall Die: Children and Communal Survival in Biblical Literature*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013.
- McKenzie, Steven L., and John Kaltner. "Preface." In *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner, xi-xiii. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013.
- Mosala, Itumeleng. "The Implications of the Text of Esther for African Women's Struggle for Liberation in South Africa." *Semeia* 59 (1992): 129-137.
- Petersen, John. *Reading Women's Stories: Female Characters in the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2004.
- Pippin, Tina. "Biblical Women as Ideological Constructs Toward Justice: Ideological Criticism as a Feminist/Womanist Method." In *Feminist Interpretations of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect*, Vol. III: Methods, ed. Susanne Scholz, 261-277. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2016.
- Polzin, Robert. "The Speaking Person and His Voice in 1 Samuel." *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 36 (1985): 218-229.
- Raphael, Rebecca. *Biblical Corpora: Representations of Disability in Hebrew Biblical Literature*. New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2008.
- Rees, T. "Barren." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley, 432-433. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1979.
- Retief, Marno, and Rantsoa Letšosa. "Models of Disability: A Brief Overview." *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71, no. 1 (2018): 2-3.
- Rowland, Christopher. "Social, Political, and Ideological Criticism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu, 655-674. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Schipper, Jeremy. "Disabling Israelite Leadership: 2 Samuel 6:23 and Other Images of Disability in the Deuteronomistic History." In *This Aabled Body Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, ed. Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper, 103-114. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.
- Schipper, Jeremy. *Disability & Isaiah's Suffering Servant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Scholz, Susanne. *The Bible as Political Artifact: On the Feminist Study of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017.

- Scholz, Susanne. *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Schones, David A. "Buying Biblical Babies: Genesis 16 and Commercial Surrogacy." *Resonance: A Religious Studies Journal* 2 (2017): 1-17
- Segovia, Fernando F. "Reading the Bible Ideologically: Socioeconomic Criticism." In *To Each Its Own Meaning*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, 283-306. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- Sipilä, Seppo. "On Portions, Nostrils, and Anger—A Crux Interpretum in 1 Samuel 1.5." *The Bible Translator* 64 (2013): 75-81.
- Soulen, Richard N., and Kendall Soulen, R. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism: Third Edition Revised and Expanded*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Sugirtharajah, R. S. *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Trible, Phyllis. "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, no. 1 (1973): 30-48.
- Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978.
- Weems, Renita J. *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible*. San Diego, CA: LuraMedia, 1988.
- West, Mona. "Ruth." In *The Queer Bible Commentary*, ed. Deryn Guest, Robert E. Goss, Mona West, and Thomas Bohache, 190-194. London: SCM, 2006.
- Williams, Delores S. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993.
- Willis, Timothy. "Barren, Barrenness." In *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible A-C*. Vol. 1, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, Samuel E. Balentine, Brian K. Blount, Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan, Joel B. Green, Eileen Schuller, PHEME Perkins, Paul Franklyn, and Marianne Blickenstaff, 400-401. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006.
- Wilson, Nancy. *Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible*. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1989.

3. Social-Scientific Monographs, Journal Articles, and Anthologies

- Andrews, Lori B. "Surrogate Motherhood: The Challenge for Feminists." *Law, Medicine & Healthcare* 16 (1988): 72-80.

- Aseffa, Fikir. "Socio-cultural Perceptions of Infertility and their Implications: A Study of Women Experiencing Childlessness in South Gondar, Ethiopia." Master's thesis, University of Bergen, 2011.
- Balen, Frank van, and Henny M. W. Bos. "The Social and Cultural Consequences of Being Childless in Poor-Resource Areas." *ObGyn* 1, no. 2 (2009): 106-121.
- Balen, Frank von, and Marcia C. Inhorn. "Interpreting Infertility: A View from the Social Sciences." In *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*, ed. Marcia C. Inhorn and Frank von Balen, 3-32. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002.
- Barnes, Liberty Elizabeth Walther. "Preconceived Notions: The Social Construction of Male Infertility." PhD Diss., University of California, San Diego, 2011.
- Becker, Gay. *The Elusive Embryo: How Women and Men Approach New Reproductive Technologies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000.
- Berger Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966.
- Berkhout, Suze G. "Buns in the Oven: Objectification, Surrogacy, and Women's Autonomy." *Social Theory and Practice* 34 (2008): 95-117.
- Burnett, Judith A. "Use of Assisted Reproductive Technology and Gay and Lesbian Couples." *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling* 1 (2006): 115-125.
- Chakravoarti, Upali. "A Gendered Perspective of Disability Studies." In *Disability, Gender and the Trajectories of Power*, ed. Asha Hans, 23-41. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015.
- Colen, Shellee. "'Like a Mother to Them': Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare Workers and Employers in New York." In *Feminist Anthropology a Reader*, ed. Ellen Lewin, 380-396. reprint; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Daniels, Cynthia R. *At Women's Expense: State Power and the Politics of Fetal Rights*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Dillaway, Heather E. "Mothers for Others: A Race, Class, and Gender Analysis of Surrogacy." *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 34 (2008): 301-326.
- Fine, Michelle, and Adrienne Asch. "The Question of Disability: No Easy Answer for the Women's Movement." *Reproductive Rights National Network Newsletter* 4 (1982): 19-20.
- Fine, Michelle., and Adrienne Asch, eds. *Women with Disabilities: Essays in Psychology, Culture, and Politics*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988.

- Forsythe, Susan. "Social Stigma and the Medicalization of Infertility." *Journal of the Manitoba Anthropology Students' Association* 28 (2009): 22-36.
- Franklin, Sarah. "Deconstructing 'Desperateness': The Social Construction of Infertility in Popular Representations of New Reproductive Technologies." In *The New Reproductive Technologies*, ed. Maureen V. McNeil, Ian Varcoe, and Steven Yearley, 200-229. London: Macmillan, 1990.
- Freid, Marlene, ed. *From Abortion to Reproductive Freedom: Transforming a Movement*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "The Case for Conserving Disability." *Bioethical Inquiry* 9 (2012): 339-355.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Re-shaping, Re-thinking, Re-defining: Feminist Disability Studies*. Washington, DC: Center for Women Policy Studies, 2001.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory." *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 14 no. 3 (2002): 1-30.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept." *Hypatia* 26 no. 3 (2011): 591-609.
- Ginsburg, Faye D., and Rayna Rapp. "Introduction: Conceiving the New World Order." In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, 1-18. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.
- Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1963.
- Granqvist, Hilma. *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village*. Helsingfors: Centraltryckeri och Bokbinderi Ab., 1931.
- Greil, Arthur L. *Not Yet Pregnant: Infertile Couples in Contemporary America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
- Greil, Arthur L., Julia McQuillan, and Kathleen Slauson-Blevins. "The Social Construction of Infertility." *Sociology Compass* 5/8 (2011): 737-739.
- Hannahford, Susan. *Living Outside Inside: A Disabled Woman's Experience. Towards a Social and Political Perspective*. San Francisco, CA: Bookpeople, 1985.
- Hubbard, Ruth. "Abortion and Disability: Who Should and Who Should Not Inhabit the World?" In *The Disability Studies Reader: Second Edition*, ed. Lennard J. Davis, 93-104. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.

- Inhorn, Marcia C. *Infertility and Patriarchy: The Cultural Politics of Gender and Family Life in Egypt*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.
- Inhorn, Marcia C. "Missing Motherhood: Infertility, Technology, and Poverty in Egyptian Women's Lives." In *Ideologies and Technologies of Motherhood: Race, Class, Sexuality, Nationalism*, ed. Helena Ragoné and France Winddance Twine, 139-168. New York, NY: Routledge, 2000.
- Kaplan, Deborah. "Prenatal Screening and Diagnosis: The Impact on Persons with Disabilities." In *Women and Prenatal Testing: Facing the Challenges of Genetic Testing*, ed. Karen H. Rothenberg and Elizabeth J. Thompson, 49-62. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1994.
- Letherby, Gayle. "Other than Mother and Mothers as Others: The Experience of Motherhood and Non-Motherhood in Relation to 'Infertility' and 'Involuntary Childlessness.'" *Women's Studies International Forum* 22 (1999): 359-372.
- Lewin, Ellen. "On the Outside Looking in: The Politics of Lesbian Motherhood." In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, 103-121. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.
- Linton, Simi. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998.
- Lo, Iris Po Yee, Celia H. Y. Chan, Timothy H. Y. Chan. "Perceived Importance of Childbearing and Attitudes Toward Assisted Reproductive Technology Among Chinese Lesbians in Hong Kong: Implications for Psychological Well-Being." *Fertility and Sterility* 106 no. 5 (2016): 1221-1229.
- Mealey, Sarah Elizabeth. "The Hidden Society: A Sub-Culture of Women Dealing with Infertility." Master's thesis, San Jose State University, 2006.
- Morgan, Lynn M., and Meredith W. Michaels, eds. *Fetal Subjects, Feminist Positions*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Ragoné, Helena. "The Gift of Life: Surrogate Motherhood, Gamete Donation and Constructions of Altruism." In *Transformative Motherhood: On Giving and Getting in a Consumer Culture*, ed. Linda Layne, 65-88. New York, NY: New York University Press, 1999.
- Remennick, Larissa. "Childless in the Land of Imperative Motherhood: Stigma and Coping Among Infertile Israeli Women." *Sex Roles* 43 no. 11/12 (2000): 821-841.
- Saxton, Marsha. "Born and Unborn: The Implications of Reproductive Technologies for People with Disabilities." In *Test-Tube Women: What Future for Motherhood?*, ed. Rita Arditti, Renate Klein, and Shelly Minden, 298-312. Boston, MA: Pandora, 1984.

Saxton, Marsha. "Disability Rights and Selective Abortion." In *Abortion Wars: A Half Century of Struggle, 1950-2000*, ed. Rickie Solinger, 87-99. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998.

Scambler Graham., and Anthony Hopkins. "Being Epileptic: Coming to Terms with Stigma." *Sociology of Health and Wellness* 8, no. 1 (1986): 26-43.

Scully, Leah. *Disability Bioethics: Moral Bodies, Moral Difference*. New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008.

Sternke, Elizabeth A., and Kathleen Abrahamson. "Perception of Women with Infertility on Stigma and Disability." *Sexuality and Disability* 33 (2015): 3-17.

Sternke, Elizabeth A. "Unruly Bodies: Infertility as a Disability." PhD Diss., Purdue University, 2010.

Teitelbaum, Michael S. "Population: Biology and Anthropology." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Available online at: <https://www.britannica.com/science/population-biology-and-anthropology>.

Thompson, Charis. "Fertile Ground: Feminists Theorize Infertility." In *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*, ed. Marcia C. Inhorn and Frank von Balen, 52-78. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Wegar, Katarina. "In Search of Bad Mothers: Social Constructions of Birth and Adoptive Mothers." *Women's Studies International Forum* 20 (1997): 77-86.

Wendell, Susan. *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1996.

Wendell, Susan. "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability." *Hypatia* 4 no. 2 (1989): 104-124.

4. Other Academic Sources, WHO, Christian Self-Help Literature, Newspapers, Dictionaries

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Eleventh Edition, s.v. "Barren." Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2004.

Oxford Dictionary of English: Third Edition, s.v. "Barren." ed. Angus Stevenson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Boggs, Belle. *The Art of Waiting: On Fertility, Medicine, and Motherhood*. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2016.

- Cooper, Susan Lewis., and Ellen Sarasohn Glazer. *Beyond Infertility: The New Paths to Parenthood*. New York, NY: Lexington Books, 1994.
- Inhorn, Marcia C. "A Male Infertility Crisis is Coming. The Middle East Can Help," *New York Times*, October 21, 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/21/opinion/sunday/male-infertility-middle-east.html>.
- Levine, Hagai, Niels Jørgensen, Anderson Martino-Andrade, Jamie Mendiola, Dan Weksler-Derri, Irina Mindlis, Rachel Pinotti, Shanna H. Swan. "Temporal Trends in Sperm Count: A Systematic Review and Meta-Regression Analysis." *Human Reproduction Update* 23 (2017): 646-659.
- Mascarenhas, Maya N., Seth R. Flaxman, Ties Boerma, Sheryl Vanderpoel, Gretchen A. Stevens. "National, Regional, and Global Trends in Infertility Prevalence Since 1990: A Systematic Analysis of 277 Health Surveys." *PLOS Medicine* 9 (2012): 1-12.
- Online Etymology Dictionary, "infertile," available at: https://www.etymonline.com/word/infertility#etymonline_v_34830 [accessed on March 6, 2019]
- Roman, Leslie G. "Go Figure! Public Pedagogies, Invisible Impairments and the Performative Paradoxes of Visibility as Veracity." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 13 (2009): 677-698.
- Saake, Jennifer. *Hannah's Hope: Seeking God's Heart in the Midst of Infertility, Miscarriage, and Adoption Loss*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005.
- Skeat, Walter W. *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*. Third Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898.
- Skeat, Walter W. *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology: The Pioneering Work on the Roots and Origins of the Language*. Kertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1993.
- The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation and The Disability Alliance, *Fundamental Principles of Disability Being a summary of the discussion held on 22nd November 1975 and containing commentaries from each organization*. London: Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976.
- Wilson, Kristin J. *Not Trying: Infertility, Childlessness, and Ambivalence*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014.
- World Health Organization, "Sexuality and Reproductive Health: Infertility Definitions and Terminology." Available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/infertility/definitions/en/> [accessed on March 5, 2019].

World Health Organization, “Sexuality and Reproductive Health: Infertility is a Global Public Health Issue,” available at: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/infertility/perspective/en/> [accessed on March 5, 2019].

Zegers-Hochschild, F., G. D. Adamson, J. de Mouzon, O. Ishihara, R. Mansour, K. Nygren, E. Sullivan, and S. Vanderpoel. “International Committee for Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technology (ICMART) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Revised Glossary of ART Terminology, 2009,” *Fertility and Sterility* 92 (2009): 1520-1524.