



# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF OBSERVANT JEWISH NURSING STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

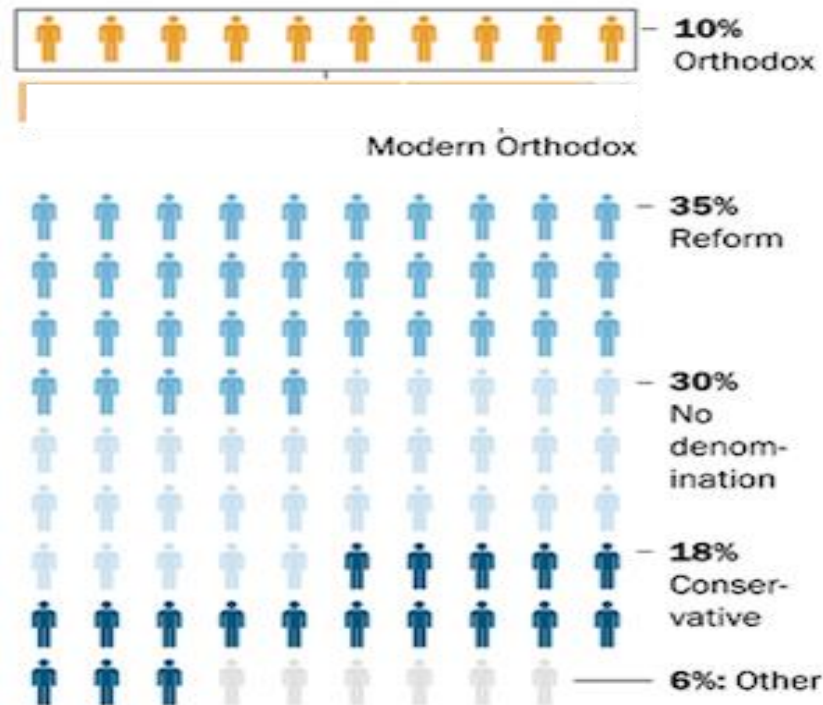
# Insights from the Literature

- \* Culture & Ethnicity
- \* Observant Jews (Old Testament, Talmud, and The Code of Jewish Law)



# Jews as a Minority

## One-in-Ten American Jews are Orthodox



Source: Pew Research Center 2013 Survey of U.S. Jews, Feb. 20-June 13, 2013. QH1, QH2. Based on the net Jewish population (both Jews by religion and Jews of no religion). "Don't know" responses are not shown. Figures may not sum to 100% or to totals indicated due to rounding.

# Research Design

- \* Descriptive Phenomenological Design
  - \* Husserl
- \* Protection of human subjects
  - \* Molloy College Institutional Review Board
- \* Data Collection
  - \* Purposive sampling (n=8)
- \* Role of the Researcher (Bracketing)

# Study Sample

**Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N (%)</b>
	<b>Total N = 8</b>
Gender	
Male	0 (0)
Female	8 (100)
Academic Status	
Senior	6 (75)
Junior	2 (25)
Marital Status	
Single	3 (38)
Married	5 (62)
Divorced	0 (0)
Ethnic Affiliation	
Ashkenazic Jew	7 (86)
Sephardic Jew	1 (14)
Number of Children	
Zero children	5 (62)
Zero-Three children	2 (25)
Four- Five children	0 (0)
Six or more children	1 (13)
Primary Home Address	
New Jersey	3 (38)
New York	4 (50)
Florida	1 (13)

# Themes

lines immersion Blurred  
Concealing loving Mitzvot expected  
differences External make Cultural  
revealing Hashem Nursing  
role kindness  
nurturance responding reflecting good acts  
awareness graces social  
norms values curiosity obligations Supportive  
accepted teachers Kiddush chesed  
other Wanting impression inner



# Nursing and Mitzvot the Ultimate Chesed

*“Our goals are to always do good deeds...  
That ’s Mitzvot and that ’s nursing ”*

Why not be a nurse? We need orthodox nurses. Whom do you want taking care of your grandparents, your family members? This is the biggest mitzvah. We definitely do the greatest mitzvah by nursing others. This is the biggest mitzvah.

I know I will be able to help people and that's the ultimate chesed. That's what nursing is all about.

I feel like it's something fulfilling and rewarding. I'm going to be working and fulfilling a mitzvah at the same time. Our way of life is helping others and keeping the mitzvot and doing good deeds. I feel like nursing will be something fulfilling and rewarding and it feels right, like I am doing the right thing. That's a big part of our religion, helping others. So nursing is a perfect fit for that type of lifestyle.

# External Differences Reflecting Inner Values

*“We are different, not just outside-in, but inside-out”*

I just feel different. I don't know how to explain it. What I look like, the way I dress, how I feel and it could be that I feel more different inside that I am perceived to be. This might be because I know how different I know I am. They may only know how different I am based on what they see, but I know everything else that makes me different. It's what we do and who we are as Jews. We have different customs, for example, I cover my hair by wearing a head scarf and I feel different, but it's the values associated with these things that really make me feel different. I'm observant and that always comes first.

I'm in a world that's not exactly accommodating to every aspect of my Jewishness. My inner differences are more distinct than my dress. Let's just say I live with a Jewish purpose, what am I doing every day to be better, what are my spiritual goals, and how am I going to be a better person and a better Jew?



# Concealing and Revealing: Obligations Responding to Cultural Curiosity

*“Trying to demystify the myths ”*

I have to say, sometimes it's a bit much... asking about the way we dress, our food and about intimate relationships .They ask about anything and everything

I just think it's hard to explain some of the stuff that we're doing when I get asked questions and I think some people are fascinated by the questions. People ask me about the Sabbath , about what I'm eating or why can't I eat things. People ask me dating questions and question about sex...

I used to be afraid to answer any question or even talk about me being Jewish and I'm not scared anymore. I just needed to get comfortable. We talk about cultural diversity. I think it's just too hard to explain to someone, it's just too hard to explain certain things. Sometimes they'll bring up examples about Jews. I don't really mind but it still would never go the other way. I would never ask someone about their wig. But they're just asking me about my Sheitel (wig)

# Cultural Immersion and Awareness of the Other

*“It goes both ways”*

There was a student this past summer and I was complaining one day about going in for clinical because it was a fast day and she, being Muslim, said “I’ve been fasting the whole month!” I didn’t realize other people are also culturally connected with cultures similar ways to mine, just a little different. It’s amazing and interesting.

It's pretty interesting because some people have things in common that I didn't know about. So it goes both ways. We might be their first contact with a Jewish person. Just like I've never had experience with Asian people. So I got to learn about everyone else too, which was fun. Now I get to compare all the religions to each other. If you are going to ask me about kosher, I'm okay so what's Hallal, tell me what that means... it goes both ways

One girl was talking about her church experience and then they were asking about synagogue. It just fit. In the past four years, I feel I gained way more life experience than I had before that. I guess every year you get more... but you're still learning about people. People that are different and haven't spent time with you for your entire life, those certain things have definitely helped academically. Like why should I start judging people and saying oh this is the wrong way. If the whole thing in life is that it's open, there's an appreciation of different types.

# Blurred Lines: Accepted Social Norms and Expected Social Graces

*“A delicate balance of walking that fine line”*

Socially, there's always some discomfort with a social event, and I don't really know what to expect from this event, because I've never really been to a non-Jewish gathering before.

Well, I feel like non-Jews and non-religious people go to school and they are open to making friends with everybody. They will go drinking after our finals, I never go.

Handshakes, I don't know what to do. Yeah, that type of thing or even like I did have an incident with a hug and I didn't know what to do with that. That definitely happens sometimes. I know it doesn't sound like a big deal but I'm not used to this. It's a delicate balance of walking that fine line.

Socializing becomes an issue sometimes. Let's say for example some students were going out drinking and asked will you come? We're like no, it's okay, thanks. We (the other Jewish students) would really be out of place. Also, I don't know what it's going to be like, the music, the drinking. I don't know what these people are going to be doing. I don't know if I want to go to a place like that. I can't just imagine.

# Supportive Nurturance and the Teacher's Role

*"I was so happy that there was someone who would do that for me"*

I have a teacher now and she's great. I have a clinical on Fridays, so that's a little difficult. But she lets me leave early. She's awesome. I come in early, I skip lunch, and then she lets me leave in time for Shabbos

The teachers have been very accommodating. For clinicals, it was never a problem. They have been accommodating. I haven't had any issues. From what I hear, I'm lucky.

I was frustrated that she didn't take my word for it. Why would I want to make life more difficult for myself by missing a clinical that I have to make up on the weekend? Why don't you just understand that I'm not lying to you about this?

In nursing school, you really need that support from everyone. Not only your friends or classmates, but especially your teachers.

I feel like they (the teachers) are pretty understanding; I'm surprised that they are so accepting of my religious traditions and things I need to do

## Wanting to Make a Good Impression; Kiddush Hashem (Sanctify G-d)

*“I want to honor and acknowledge G-d, I do that through my actions ”*

I want to honor and acknowledge G-d and I do that through my actions. We have our own ways, our own path if you will. So because we do have our own ways and our own lifestyle and it's hard to be different and for other people to understand that because this is who we are and we're proud people and we have a beautiful way of being and interacting and family is first and all that. From the outside, if you're not in this community, it's hard to understand.

A lot of students have never met Orthodox Jews. I always feel like people are looking at me, “Oh, what do Jews do? How do Jews act?” So it's more of a responsibility in terms of how I act and it's a lot of pressure.

Being Jewish is such a big part of our life and a lot of people are fascinated about it so it's a perfect way to make a Kiddush Hashem. And I don't want them to think anything bad about Orthodox Jews- I just want to make a good impression as a Jew, for all Jews, but especially Orthodox Jews

# Limitations

- \* Findings generalized to participant sample
  - \* Strict inclusion criteria
- \* Sample size
- \* Alternative interpretations
- \* Participants willingness to disclose their experiences
- \* Public / Private Universities
- \* Northeastern region of the United States



# Implications for Nursing Education and Practice

- \* Cultural awareness and sensitivity
- \* University policies
- \* Examine the preparedness of faculty
- \* Cultural immersion opportunities
- \* Workforce educational initiatives
- \* Creating cultural dialogue



# Discussion

- \* Culture and Faith can be a powerful influence in academia
  - \* Sensitivity
- \* Self Awareness
  - \* Navigating and celebrating differences
- \* Support of the teacher



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