The Lived Experience of Observant Jewish Nursing Students: A Phenomenological Study

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

By

TOBY BRESSLER

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

at

Molloy College

____________________________________

Dissertation Committee:

Rose Schecter, PhD, RN, Molloy College
Lorraine Emeghebo, EdD, RN, Molloy College
Rebecca Schnall, PhD, MPH, RN, Columbia University School of Nursing
MOLLOY COLLEGE

DIVISION OF NURSING

The dissertation of Toby Bressler entitled THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF OBSERVANT JEWISH NURSING STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of Nursing has been read and approved by the committee:

Rose Schecter, Chair
Molloy College

Lorraine Eneghebo (Member)
Molloy College

Rebecca Schnall (Member)
Columbia University, New York

Veronica D. Feege, PhD, RN, FAAN
Associate Dean and Director
PhD Program in Nursing

Date November 13, 2015
Abstract

**Background:** With expanding cultural diversity in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009), it is essential to increase the diversity of the nursing profession to match the patients who are being cared for in our healthcare system (IOM, 2003; Sullivan Commission, 2004). Despite improvements to the demographic composition of the nursing workforce in recent decades, the nursing workforce has remained predominantly homogeneous and to meet the current and future health needs of the public while providing culturally relevant care, the nursing workforce needs to increase its diversity (IOM, 2010). This demographic shift creates a social imperative that requires healthcare agencies to attract and retain nurses from diverse cultural groups.

**Objective:** The purpose of this research was to understand the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students (OJNS). Lessons learned from this research may be translatable to other racial, ethnic and religious minority groups. This study relied on phenomenological inquiry to illustrate the experience of observant Jewish female nursing students in the Northeastern region of the United States, all of whom self-identified as observant Jews. The criteria of being an observant Jew was observance of the Sabbath and holidays, adherence to the dietary laws of kashrut and observance of the principles of modesty (skirts that cover the knees and shirts or loose fitting blouses that cover the elbows and the neck).

**Method:** This study used descriptive phenomenological research methods. A convenient purposive sampling of junior and senior baccalaureate students in the Northeastern region of the United States and consisted of eight female nursing students who had all self-identified as observant Jews. In depth face-to-face interviews using semi-structured interview questions was conducted and audio recorded. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. NVIVO software was
used for data management and analysis. The analytic approach of Husserl (1913/1962) and Fu (2008) descriptive phenomenological methods were employed to synthesize data, in order to focus on the lived experience of all the participants.

**Results:** This study illuminated the lived experience of these OJNS. Seven themes synthesized from the data were: 1) Nursing and *Mitzvot* (commandment or charitable act) the ultimate *chesed* (acts of loving kindness); 2) External differences reflecting inner values; 3) Concealing or revealing: obligations responding to cultural curiosity; 4) Cultural immersion and the awareness of the other; 5) Blurred lines: accepted social norms and expected social graces; 6) Supportive nurturance and the teachers’ role; 7) Wanting to make a good impression *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctifying G-d’s name). Findings from this study illustrate the interaction between students’ motivation to become a nurse experience, academic experience and faith-based and cultural values. Modest dress as an external difference that reflected inner differences and values, appreciation of inner strength and their devotion to personal/academic growth emerged.

**Conclusion:** Understanding the experience of OJNS is important due to increasing nursing workforce diversity, validating cultural awareness and sensitivity and transcultural nursing. These findings may be used to influence educational program development for Orthodox Jewish nursing students and other religious minority groups. Findings from this study might inform curricula design and interventions pertinent to developing greater awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of religious and culturally diverse nursing students in order to maximize the recruitment and retention of diverse ethnic minorities in nursing education.
Dedication

“Piha patcha bechachma, Vetorat chesed al leshona”

“She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.”

Proverbs 31:26 Woman of Valor (Eishet Chayil)

This study is lovingly dedicated to my grandmother, my “Bobbie” Dina a true Eishet Chayil.

Bobbie, your strength of character as you persevered through adversity, your brilliance and your encompassing and unconditional love has helped me become the person I am today.
A dissertation is immense labor. It “takes a village” to raise a nursing scholar.

It would be unfair that I take all the credit for completing this task. Much is owed to the many who have mentored me throughout my journey.

First of all, I want to express my appreciation to the participants of this study; it was the collective combination of your intelligence and sincerity that were powerfully inspirational and I am proud to be your colleague.

I am ever so grateful to my committee members for their guidance and assistance.

First and foremost to Dr. Rose Schecter who graciously agreed to chair my committee, for her wisdom and guidance as my advisor, throughout the duration of my PhD studies. Thank you for your constant encouragement, for your commitment to excellence and for your continual support. You are my lifelong teacher, steadfastly imparting powerful lessons of leadership, perseverance and humanity.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Lorraine Emeghebo for her expertise in qualitative research and for the multiple hours she spent reading and re-reading my transcripts; thank you for sharing my excitement and passion for this research.

Dr. Rebecca Schnall, I so appreciate your advice, attention to detail, and, above all, for your determination to ensure an end result of which I can be proud.

To Dr. Veronica Feeg, chairperson of the PhD program and mentor extraordinaire, thank you for your continuous guidance and inspiration.

A special thanks is owed to my life-long mentors and advisors, Dr. Anthony Kovner and Dr. Chris Kovner. I am immensely grateful for all your encouragement and influence throughout my career and I feel doubly blessed to have you both in my life.
My sincere appreciation to an exceptional nurse leader and benevolent soul, my chief nursing officer, Dr. Thomas Smith; thank you for being an excellent boss and for encouraging and supporting me in every way.

To my kindred spirit Millie, thank you for your expressing interest in my research when it was only a concept and for your intelligence and wit. Special thanks to my friend Batsheva; our cherished connection, coffee dates, numerous conversations are precious, and for all that is indescribable I am grateful.

To my fellow PhDivas: You are sisters of a lifetime and gifts to be treasured; this journey wouldn’t have been the same without you!

Though this study reflects the work accomplished in my doctoral research, it is my personal experience that led me to where I am today.

I would like to thank my in-laws Rabbi Chaim and Rebbetzin Sarah Bressler for their lifelong support. Thank you for treating me like your daughter and for infusing me, and my family, with the importance of our traditional lifestyle, and commitment to Torah values in every phase and facet of our lives. Your love and generosity knows no bounds.

To my children, who endured many pizza dinners and countless hours of Mommy glued to the computer, thank you and yes, I am done at last! To my boys, Dovid, Yaakov, Moshe, Daniel, Menachem and Yosef and to my girls Shaindy, Dina and Chayala, my heart and soul overflows with love for you and I hope and pray you continue to bring us joy.

My accomplishments are not mine alone. Much credit belongs to my husband Tzvi, who has been a constant support and quiet source of strength all through my studies and career. Heartfelt thanks for encouraging me, first to become a nurse, and later to embark on my PhD. You are my soulmate, enthusiast and champion. Thank you for inspiring me to be my best, listening to my ideas, big and small and for valuing my work. This study is as much yours as it is mine.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. iii

Dedication .......................................................................................................................... v

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... vi

List of Tables ..................................................................................................................... xi

CHAPTER ONE ...................................................................................................................... 1

Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 1

Background ......................................................................................................................... 6

The Phenomenon ................................................................................................................ 9

Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 11

Personal Experience ......................................................................................................... 11

Justification for Methodology .......................................................................................... 13

Significance for Nursing ................................................................................................... 13

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .................................................................. 16

Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 16

Jews as Minorities ............................................................................................................. 16

Judaism ............................................................................................................................... 24

Jewish Observance ........................................................................................................... 27
Dietary Laws ......................................................................................................................... 31

Holiday Observance ............................................................................................................. 33

Orthodox Jewish Customs .................................................................................................... 35
  Social Norms ...................................................................................................................... 35
  Modesty Practice ............................................................................................................... 35
  The Rov or Rebbe ............................................................................................................. 38

Minority Nursing Students .................................................................................................. 41

Philosophy and Methodology ............................................................................................... 49
  Husserl ............................................................................................................................... 49

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS ............................................................. 56

Introduction to Method ........................................................................................................ 56

Rationale for Descriptive Phenomenology Method ............................................................... 58

Development and Emergence (Husserl) ............................................................................ 58

Research Procedure ............................................................................................................. 61
  Participant Sample ............................................................................................................ 61
  Recruitment ....................................................................................................................... 63
  Data Management ........................................................................................................... 64
  Data Collection .................................................................................................................. 65

Analysis .................................................................................................................................. 69

Reliability and Validity ......................................................................................................... 75

Trustworthiness and Audit Trail .......................................................................................... 76

Ethical Considerations ........................................................................................................ 78
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Human Subjects</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Beliefs</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4: STUDY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Findings</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Sample</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Notes</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Participants</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme I:                       Nursing and Mitzvot the Ultimate Chesed</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Our goals are to always do good deeds. That’s Mitzvot and that’s nursing”</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme II:                      External Differences Reflecting Internal Values</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We are different, not just outside-in, but inside-out”</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme III:                     Concealing and Revealing: Obligations Responding to Cultural Curiosity</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Trying to demystify the myths”</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme IV:</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cultural Immersion and Awareness of the Other ............................................................................................................. 126

“It goes both ways” ......................................................................................................................................................... 126

Theme V: ........................................................................................................................................................................... 129
Blurred Lines: Accepted Social Norms and Expected Social Graces ............................................................................. 129
“A delicate balance of walking that fine line” .................................................................................................................... 129

Theme VI: ........................................................................................................................................................................... 133
Supportive Nurturance and the Teacher’s Role.................................................................................................................. 133
“I was so happy that there was someone who would do that for me” .............................................................................. 133

Theme VII: ........................................................................................................................................................................... 142
Wanting to Make a Good Impression: Kiddush Hashem (Sanctify G-d) ................................................................. 142
“I want to honor and acknowledge G-d and I do that through my actions” ................................................................. 142

Summary ............................................................................................................................................................................ 147

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION .............................................................................................................................................. 149

Summary ............................................................................................................................................................................ 149

Links to Nursing Theory ................................................................................................................................................... 153

Integrating Findings with Previous Literature .............................................................................................................. 155

Limitations ........................................................................................................................................................................... 157

Implications of Findings ..................................................................................................................................................... 160

Implications for Nursing Education ................................................................................................................................. 160
Implications for Nursing Practice .................................................................................................................................. 163
Implications for Nursing Research .................................................................................................................................. 165

Recommendations for Future Research ............................................................................................................................ 167
List of Tables

Table 1.0: A Descriptive Phenomenological Method.....................72

Table 4.1: Summary of the Participants Demographics.....................87

Table 4.2: Primary Themes & Thematic Elements..........................108
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

With expanding cultural diversity in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009), it is essential to increase the diversity within the nursing profession to meet the needs of our culturally diverse communities (IOM, 2003; Sullivan Commission, 2004). The United States population is projected to grow from 281 million in the year 2000 to 432 million in the year 2060 and the country’s demographics are changing as well. The projection is that by the year 2060, minorities will comprise 56 percent of the population, making them the dominant population. Subsequently, the demographic composition of the workforce is of paramount importance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Despite improvements to the demographic composition of the nursing workforce in recent decades, the nursing workforce has remained predominantly homogeneous (IOM, 2010). Currently, cultural and ethnic minorities make up 34 percent of the United States population and only 12 percent of the registered nurse (RN) workforce (AACN, 2010). To meet the current and future health needs of the public and to provide culturally relevant care, the nursing workforce needs to increase its diversity (IOM, 2010). Although currently the collection of socio-demographic data focuses on
racial and ethnic information, there is opportunity to enhance demographic information to include faith-based diversity.

Jews have a long history of being identified as a religious, cultural or ethnic minority group (Dashefsky & Sheskin, 2013; Gittler, 1972; Kadushin & Tighe, 2008; Meer, 2013). Kadushin and colleagues (2005) wrote that given the small percentage of Jews in the United States population, Jews “as a culturally distinct group can be identified as a scarce population” (Kadushin, Phillips, & Saxe, 2005). As recently as 2013, Dashefsky and Sheskin support the notion of Jews as a distinct minority group in the United States (Dashefsky & Sheskin, 2013). Langman (1995) referred to the identification of Jews as the “invisible minority” within the United States population (Langman, 1995). Investigation of the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student, particularly as it relates to their educational experience is pertinent at this time, given the growing awareness for meeting the needs of cultural, ethnic and faith-based minorities.

In the past, nursing education may have been ethnocentric in practice and at times may have lacked the attention to students’ cultural and ethnic differences (Amaro, Abriam-Yago, & Yoder, 2006). It is therefore imperative to understand the meaning of the experience of being a nursing student from the perspective of an ethnic minority. There can be positive implications in
gathering information to assist nurse educators in shaping the design of academic programs in
order to maximize the recruitment and retention of diverse ethnic minorities. This research will
focus specifically on gaining insight and understanding about the lived experience of observant
Jewish nursing students. Problems experienced by one ethnic minority group may apply to other
minority groups within the nursing student population. Insight into one minority group can
perhaps also be used to educate nurse educators on this and other minority ethnic groups within
the nursing student population.

There is a paucity of research related to the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing
students. As a result, little is known about their experience as they navigate their way through
nursing school. Understanding this group of students is significant in order to add to nursing
education literature. A recent study on the topic of the lived experience of orthodox Jewish
nurses revealed a need to provide improved, effective education in nursing programs with
administrators and faculty increasing their cultural awareness. The qualitative data, through an
analysis of interviews in this study reflected the lack of cultural competence of nurse educators
for Orthodox Jewish nursing students (Cohen, 2013). Cohen’s research recommends “the need to
provide improved, effective education for nursing program administrators and faculty with
respect to cultural competence” (Cohen, 2013 p.188) and supports the need to study the
observant Jewish students (OJNS) experience in nursing school. Additionally, it is important to formally examine the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students in an effort to meet their needs, and promote understanding of the importance of the beliefs and values of minority nursing student. Nurse educators may have a greater awareness and sensitivity when acquainted with the lived experience of a religious and cultural minority group of nursing students.

As an observant Jewish nursing student, and now as a nurse researcher, I wondered if observant Jewish nursing students had unique experiences in nursing school influenced by culture and religious beliefs and practices. By exploring if other observant Jewish nursing students had a similar or different educational experience than mine, this research will help nurse educators and faculty understand how the experiences of OJNS influence the recruitment and retention of nursing students. As a qualitative researcher, I shall be the instrument in conducting the research and the analysis will be viewed through my worldview, therefore my interest in the topic.

Religious identity, with its beliefs and cultural practice and experience, is a unique process and certain cultural affiliations are seen as meaningful and even defining as part of religious identity (Cohen & Hill, 2007). In collective religious cultures such as Judaism, people are seen as fundamentally connected with one another and their religious and cultural
communities (Safran, 2005). At the individual level, these cultural models provide inherent blueprints of how to think, feel, and act. “Subscribing to this view of culture, we claim that groups of people that share religious identity can be meaningfully viewed as sharing cultural models and indeed as members of different cultures” (Cohen & Hill, 2007, p. 718). Cultural models are sets of assumptions that are widely shared by a group of people, and displayed through rituals and practices (Leininger & McFarland, 1995).

Ethnicity and culture are often used interchangeably, but these terms refer to different concepts. Ethnicity refers to “the social identity of a social group largely related to language, and national origin” (Leininger & McFarland, 1995, p. 49). Culture, on the other hand, refers to “the learned and shared knowledge of values, beliefs, norms and life ways of a particular group that help guide the individual or group in their thinking, decisions and actions in patterned ways” (Leininger & McFarland, 1995, p. 9). These differences are important to recognize the value of the unique experience of observant Jewish nursing students in an academic world.

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the experience of observant Jewish nursing students enrolled in a baccalaureate degree nursing program in the Northeast region of the United States. The focus of this study is to gain insight into the experience of the observant Jewish nursing student and to understand how culture influenced their experience. My personal
interest in this research is based upon a positive schooling experience and ascertaining if others had a similar or dissimilar experience has been the catalyst for this study. Culture may provide an overall influence of circumstances as nursing students negotiate this experience through a cultural lens.

**Background**

Traditional nursing students were historically young, unmarried, Anglo-Saxon women entering nursing programs as first time students, soon after completing their secondary education (AACN, 2005, 2010). Today, many students who enter the nursing profession come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds (NLN, 2014). Accurate descriptions of the experience and estimates of the number of certain ethnic populations are difficult to obtain. The acculturation of culturally diverse nursing students is particularly hard to determine because of small sizes of this group and in particular because studies of nursing students within the United States do not necessarily focus on cultural affiliation.

Currently, many students who enter the nursing profession come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Professional organizations over the last several years have promoted expansion and diversity within the nursing workforce. The National League of Nursing,
American Nurses Association and National Student Nurses Association have listed increasing
diversity as one of the top trends to monitor in the next decade.

The overall purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study is to understand the
experience of observant Jewish nursing students in nursing school within the context of their
culture and religious identity. It is hoped that the insight gained from this study may help
illuminate the experience of this particular group of observant Jewish nursing students. There is
an assumption that a culturally diverse nursing student body may increase the
underrepresentation of cultural and ethnic minorities of the nursing workforce. The
understanding of the observant Jewish nursing student’s experience may lead to increased
awareness and sensitivity of nurse educators and administrators.

Madeline Leininger in her classic culture research developed the Theory of Culture Care,
Diversity and Universality, which states that all human beings experience culture, and those
cultures differ from group to group (Leininger, 1998). The theory of cultural care, diversity and
universality developed by Leininger is used to inform both clinical nursing practice and nursing
education.

Within qualitative research and design, there are inconclusive and differing opinions
about the role and position of theory (Creswell, 2009; Parse, 2001). As a result of these
documented opposing opinions, a deep comprehension of the lived experience cannot always or necessarily be based upon theory. Therefore, the theory of Madeline Leininger and others will be presented and discussed within the review of the literature.

According to Creswell, philosophical inquiry may be the most suitable approach to study this phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2009). It is through a qualitative descriptive approach that the researcher studied the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students. The purpose of this inquiry was to understand the observant Jewish nursing students’ experience in their educational class and clinical settings relative to their cultural norms. Understanding the OJNS experience may influence the practice of nurse educators, administrators and those who come in contact with student nurses during their educational experiences. This awareness of their experiences may be influential in the recruitment and retention of these students and might influence the pursuit of graduate education by these students later in their professional careers.

The researcher used a descriptive phenomenological method based on Husserl’s phenomenology (Husserl, 1913/1962). In Husserl’s descriptive phenomenological approach, each experience is viewed as containing essences or essential structures. The goal of the researcher is to delineate the aforementioned structures and to describe the experiences in terms of perceptions, intentions, and actions (Husserl, 1913/1962; Leavy, 2011). In contrast to the
study of particulars (the facts of an experience), an essence is the “essential generality” shared by individuals with similar experiences (Husserl, 1962, p. 47). An essence is described as something important with defining characteristics similar to how something is explained in principle (Creswell, 2013). An individual’s personal experience is embedded within a cultural context, or within background details of historical or deeply personal experience; therefore, individuals life-world and thus their related subjective view is related to the context of their entire experience (Husserl, 1913/1962). This descriptive phenomenological method is synergistic with the purpose of inquiry to understand the observant Jewish nursing students’ shared lived experience. Future discussion of Husserl will be presented in greater detail within the review of the literature and research design and methods.

The Phenomenon

The researcher explored the observant Jewish nursing students’ lived experience in their academic journey as junior or senior nursing students in a baccalaureate degree nursing program in the Northeastern region of the United States. Understanding the experience of observant Jewish nursing students (OJNS) is pertinent to inform educators and educational programs that may have this minority group enrolled within their universities. Furthermore, by exploring OJN’s lived experience, this research has the potential for extrapolating information to perhaps
enhance the sensitivity of nurse educators, nurse administrators, and practicing nurses who come in contact with student nurses during their education, to other cultural minority student groups.

A descriptive phenomenological approach was used for the design of this study in search of the meaning of the observant Jewish nursing students’ lived experience. A qualitative research design is interactive and dynamic (Leavy, 2011). This study hoped to gain insight into the experience of the observant Jewish nursing students (OJNS) and to have their voices emerge in order to gain insight and understanding of their experience of acculturating within nursing school in relationship to their religious affiliation and cultural norms.

Information gained from this study will address the gap in the literature specific to the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students. Perceiving and recognizing the meaning of the experience of these students may assist in heightening awareness of educators and educational programs in order to increase awareness and sensitivity to the observant Jew and perhaps other cultural or religious minority student groups.

The observant Jew follows the Torah law and rituals literally (Dashefsky & Sheskin, 2013). The Torah dictates how followers should live their lives both publicly and privately and the Torah is both a Bible and “guide” book with interpretations written by rabbinical scholars.
Members of the observant Orthodox Jewish community subscribe to the social values and norms including gender separation, modesty in behavior and dress, and placing boundaries between themselves and the secular world to forestall assimilation. This limits the exposure and assimilation with the secular world.

A descriptive phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study as there is limited information on this topic (Creswell, 2009). The researcher uncovered the unique experience of observant Jewish nursing students studying nursing in the Northeastern region of the United States and subsequently this research may inform other studies with greater cultural awareness.

**Research Questions**

This research will focus on gaining an understanding of what observant Jewish student nurses experience. The research question guiding this study is: “What is the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students while in a Baccalaureate (BSN) nursing school program within the context of their cultural and religious identity?”

**Personal Experience**

Overall my student nursing experience within the academic setting has been positive. My educational path began within a city community college and I continued my studies in a state university-RN completion program. My academic journey progressed to graduate studies in a large private college within an urban setting, and finally, as a doctoral student in an
independent Catholic college rooted within the Dominican traditions of study, spirituality, service and community (Molloy College Handbook). In each of these varied settings, I have found supportive and accommodating academic communities and faculty. For example, my need to wear a skirt (rather than trousers) to the clinical setting was not an issue, although the other students in my clinical group wore uniform pants. Exams were rescheduled from Friday afternoon to another day, in order to allow for my Sabbath observance. There was and continues to be, a conscientious effort in various schools to ensure my dietary kosher needs are accommodated.

These positive and affirmative personal academic experiences have been thematic throughout my academic journey; however I have often wondered if my experience reflected that of other observant Jewish nursing students. I have learned from classmates and colleagues from similar and different cultural and religious minorities of unfavorable occurrences within nursing school. These negative anecdotal incidents occurred in classrooms and clinical settings including accounts of marginalization, dismissive or disrespectful behaviors and discrimination. I remain curious if observant Jewish nursing students have a similar or dissimilar experience relative to my experience in nursing school based upon their culture and ethnicity.
Justification for Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive design to understand the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student. This research is reflective of the voices of observant Jewish nursing students’ experience as a junior or senior nursing student in the Northeast region of the United States. There is a dearth of literature documenting the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student as it relates to their acculturation in nursing school. It is hoped that this research may facilitate and enhance awareness and sensitivity of educators towards observant Jewish students. Furthermore, the findings from this research might increase the understanding of the experience of observant Jewish nursing students and influence the practices of nurse educators.

Significance for Nursing

This study is significant as there is limited research that focuses on observant Jewish nursing students in the United States. There is a paucity of formal analysis of the experience of this group. The findings may add to transcultural nursing educational literature and has the possibility to contribute to an enhanced sensitivity of nurse educators to their students. As noted, Jews have been identified as an ethnic, religious and cultural minority (Gittler, 1972; Langman, 1995). The social science literature has addressed the needs of particular ethnic, religious and cultural minority student groups as it relates to the experience on university campuses in the US.
Although there are nursing studies that focus on racial or ethnic minority students there is little research to date about the experience of the observant Jewish nursing students. It is important for educators to be aware of the cultural needs of ethnic and religious diverse students. This research will attempt to address this deficiency by illuminating the experience of this particular minority group. The OJNS experiences might lead to knowledge that may increase their recruitment and retention into nursing school and subsequently the workforce. This research may also increase awareness of nurse administrators, and practicing nurses who may work with observant Jewish nursing students during their clinical coursework. Finally this research may influence their interest in pursuing graduate education.

As Leininger and McFarland (2002) reported, and as the state of the science literature review revealed, there is limited research in the area of observant Jews in nursing practice as well as nursing education. Therefore, this study will provide information that may heighten the nurse educator’s knowledge and sensitivity to this particular group of students. It is important for nurse educators to develop a greater awareness and understanding of religious and culturally diverse nursing students. As noted earlier there is a call to increase diversity within the nursing profession in order to meet the need of our growing culturally diverse communities (IOM, 2003; Sullivan Commission, 2004).
An overview of Judaism and the religious and cultural norms and observances will be discussed in the state of the science review. Cultural consideration for the nursing student and nurse educator and cultural awareness will be provided in this next chapter of the review of the literature. This description will be followed by theories related to cultural diversity with particular emphasis on nurse educators.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will frame the experience of observant Jewish nursing students in the context of their culture, faith and minority status in the Northeast region of the United States.

This chapter is divided into four sections; the first three sections provide the background of the current state of the science review as it relates to Jews as a cultural and religious minority, Jewish observances, and minority nursing students. The last section discusses the philosophy and methodology of Husserl. The current literature and research within this review are incorporated to consider the experiences of the observant Jewish nursing students (OJNS) in the United States.

While historical accounts have been written about Jews in health care and more specifically about Jewish nurses (Benson, 2001, Halperin, 2012; Mayer, 1996; Sokoloff, 1992) the experience of the observant Jewish nursing student has yet to be studied. An understanding of Jews as a cultural and religious minority as well as the various texts that guide the observant Jews’ way of life must be considered.

Jews as Minorities

It is important to frame the long cultural and religious history of Jews with their background of migrations to various places in the world so that they could practice their religion
and maintain their cultural practices. Since ancient times the Jewish people have been singled out and persecuted for their religious beliefs and practices (Dashefsky & Sheskin, 2013). From 210 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) when the Syrian king Antiochus was angered by the monotheistic beliefs of the Jews and threatened to annihilate the Jewish people to more recently during the years of 1933-1945 when there was persecution and genocide of Jews in Germany and Eastern Europe (Eliach, 1982; Wiesel, 2006). These and other historical events affected the migration patterns of Jews (Marrus, 1987).

In the mid 1600’s and subsequently in the 1800’s there was a large number of Jews who relocated to the United States (Halperin, 2012). More recently, in the mid 1900’s there was another surge of Jewish immigrants searching to relocate after the Holocaust. These Jewish refugees settled and established communities in New York and along the East Coast of the United States (Safran, 2005). The need to retain religious values, beliefs and practices are motivating factors for the Jewish history of immigration (Heilman, 2002).

Jews have traditionally been identified as a religious, cultural or ethnic minority group (Dashefsky & Sheskin, 2013; Gittler, 1972; Kadushin & Tighe, 2008; Meer, 2013). The United States government does not include questions inquiring about religious identification or faith on national census surveys, therefore independent studies such as the national Jewish population
survey provide a social and demographic portrait of the American Jewish population (Kadushin, Phillips, & Saxe, 2005a). Kadushin, and some of his colleagues (2005) in the national Jewish population survey, acknowledged that given the small percentage of Jews in the United States population, Jews can be described as a culturally distinct group and can be identified as a “scarce population” (Kadushin, Phillips, & Saxe, 2005b).

Jews have historically been identified as a distinct cultural and ethnic minority within the United States as far back as 1890. According to Billings in the Vital Statistic of the Jews printed in the North American Review (1891), there was a tabulation of 500,000 Jews living in the United States at the time of publication. Billings in his description of Jews as a cultural minority group writes a “great majority of the peculiarities of these vital statistics appear to be connected to social relations and mode of life and culture rather than race characteristics” (Billings, 1891, p. 80). The author concludes his discussion with “they (the Jews) have shown that they can resist adversity, but whether this religious minority can also withstand the influences of wealth and freedom, and retain the modes of life which have heretofore given them length of days, remains to be seen” (Billings, 1891, p. 84). This classic description of Jews as a distinct religious minority, although somewhat dated, supports the current publications to date that identifies Jews as a religious minority group.
Jews have been identified as an ethnic, religious and cultural minority (Cohen & Hill, 2007; Gittler, 1972; Kadushin et al., 2005a; Siev & Cohen, 2007). Langman (1995) describes Jews as a cultural, religious and ethnic minority and refers to the identification of Jews as the “invisible minority” within the United States population (Langman, 1995). Gittler (1972) and identified Jews as an ethnic, cultural and religious minority group in the United States. In subsequent reports, Meintel (1993) defines the elements of membership in a minority group and identifies the “new minority” as being born into a minority group; using Jews as one example of this type of minority status.

Langman further identifies Jews as an invisible minority because Jews are often classified within census surveys as White. The non-identification within census data places Jews as a unique minority within the mainstream of an American census data (Langman, 1995). Within this study, Langman makes the case for Jewish identification as a cultural, ethnic and religious minority group. Currently, Jews maintain the status of an invisible minority, because they may look similar to their Anglo-Saxon counterparts and many Jews are assimilated into American society. As a result, Jews often become so American that they are seen as an assimilated non-minority within the American culture. Yet, according to Langman and others, assimilated and non-observant Jews, along with Jews from other branches of Judaism, carry a strong sense of
being members of a minority culture and religion (Gilman, 2001; Langman, 1995). This sense of being a minority, combined with knowledge of the history of Jewish persecution, makes it difficult for Jews to take their safety for granted. Outwardly it may look as if Jews are perfectly at home in America, but this is misleading. Observant and non-observant Jews still continue to perceive themselves as a minority within the broader American culture. To non-Jews this may seem paranoid. To Jews, however, who are more familiar with the history of anti-Semitism, this "paranoia" has, all too often, been justified (Wiesel, 2006). This past experience of discrimination of Jews during the Holocaust may contribute to a Jew experiencing life events through a lens of their culture and faith (Kadushin & Tighe, 2008). It is important to understand the experience of OJNS who have identified with a faith that may be different from that of the traditional student.

Jews may appear to acculturate themselves to the host society and culture; however the acculturation may be superficial (Gilman, 2001). Gilman (2001) explains that Jews are “flexible” when conditions permit them to be, and then appear to merge into the political life of the country without abandoning their ethnic loyalty (Gilman, 2001). The author expands on this further by discussing that regardless of the immersion of Jews within a host culture, they remain Jewish and are distinctly different despite the acculturation process or the language or the absorption within
the political life of the host country they seem to acquire. Gilman (2001) states: “Put them (the Jews) to the test - such as the litmus test of war - and they will reveal themselves as merely Jews in all of their racial identity” (Gilman, 2001, p. 8). This work discusses the complexity of Jews as a cultural, ethnic and religious minority and further solidifies the fact that although Jews may at times blend with the host culture, they are a complex cultural and religious minority.

In a more recent study, Comenetz (2006) compares the religious minority of Orthodox Hasidic Jews with that of the Amish of Pennsylvania and the Shakers of New England. The author identifies the distinct customs and language of these groups as their ethnic identification. These minority groups reject mores that may be incompatible with their protected way of life (Comenetz, 2006). This study is significant as it identifies Hasidic Jews as both an ethnic and religious minority based on their ethnic identifiers as well as their religious homogeneity.

As recently as 2013, Dashevsky and Sheskin support the notion of Jews as a distinct minority group in the United States. Furthermore, these authors pay particular attention to Jewish population statistics in North America. This study supports the notion of Jews as a religious minority and tracks the trends of Jewish communities within the United States (Dashefsky & Sheskin, 2013).
Jews have a long history of being a minority and are acutely aware of the effects that being a minority has within the context of their religious practice and cultural beliefs (Kadushin & Tighe, 2008). Orthodox Jews who are the most observant across the continuum represent a religious minority whose behavior and dress identifies them as being different. Due to this distinct difference Orthodox observant Jews in the United States have experienced discrimination in the workforce, seeking health care and in academia (Halperin, 2012; Kadushin & Tighe, 2008). In a study discussing minority group prejudice, Perlmutter examines the minority prejudice that can be found in the United States (Perlmutter, 2002). Despite the academic successes of Jewish students on university campuses in the United States, challenges remain. Jewish college students in particular have faced specific challenges. For example, their ability to practice their religion and social involvement with their peers are two distinct issues that may be similar to students from other ethnic and religious minorities (Kadushin & Tighe, 2008). This supports the significance in studying the particulars of this specific minority group of nursing students. Although there is research that focus on racial or ethnic minority students, there is little research to date about the experience of the observant Jewish nursing students.

While the long history of Jewish culture and historical background is beyond the scope of this study, it is helpful to understand the cultural norms and perspectives that may influence the
experience of the observant Jewish nursing student. There are complex cultural patterns in sharing and knowing cultural information about others (Leininger & McFarland, 2006). “Nurse anthropologists and nurse philosophers recognize that people are cultural beings” (Leininger, 1985, p 2) and this recognition of students’ cultural frame of reference has the potential to influence the observant Jewish nursing students’ lived experience. Exploring the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student and gathering information about their experience may give nurse educators and others insight into their cultural norms.

The investigation of the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing students, particularly as it relates to their educational experience is significant, in attempting to meet the needs of cultural, ethnic and faith-based minorities. This research will attempt to illuminate the experience of this particular minority group in the hope of contributing to heightened cultural awareness of educators and educational programs in order to increase sensitivity to this particular group.

According to the United States Census Bureau, Jews comprise less than 2 percent of the United States population (www.census.gov). According to the national Jewish survey, of the total 5,139 qualifying Jewish households interviewed, 20 percent identified as being observant Jews (National Jewish Survey, 2010). The experience of being Jewish is complex, highly personal and
accompanies the Jew over a lifetime. Self-identification as a Jew in North America is a matter of choice rather than a nationally imposed ethnicity as it was in the former Soviet Union or Nazi Germany. Because most Jews in the United States are white, they have been described as an invisible minority group (Friedlander, Friedman, Miller, Ellis, Friedlander, Mikhaylov, 2010). It is impossible to declare how many Jewish nurses are currently practicing in the US because there is no statistical tabulation on the basis of religious or faith-based identity.

**Judaism**

Judaism is a world religion with origins dating back nearly five thousand years rooted in the concept of monotheism. Originating as the beliefs and practices of the people known as “Israel” or “Israelites” Judaism traces its roots to its patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophet Moses, who received G-d’s\(^1\) law at Mount Sinai. Judaism is steeped in traditional religious, ethical and social laws as they are inscribed in the Bible. The Bible, otherwise known as the Torah, constitutes the Old Testament and includes all books of scriptures. There are two parts to the Torah, the oral and the written Torah. The written Torah is sometimes called

\[\text{\footnotesize\text{\textsuperscript{\(1\)}}\text{ According to the Talmud, It is considered a prohibition, dishonorable and disrespectful to write “G-d’s name in a place where it may be destroyed or erased.” This researcher is Jewish, therefore the “o” will be replaced throughout this text with a “-.”} \text{(Mesechtas Makos 22a, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 276:9., ND)}}\]
“Tanach” which is an acronym for the books of scriptures. The Talmud is the oral portion of the Torah. The Talmud is an oral compilation of a variety of subjects comprising ethics, philosophy, customs, history and parables and laws. The law of the Torah is otherwise known as Halacha and is the practical application of Jewish law. The Torah and its teachings are believed to be the guidebook for the observant Jews’ way of life. Observant Jewish life is a complex and interwoven tapestry of religion, cultural tradition, family and community. These contributing variables may influence the observant Jewish nursing students’ experiences.

Leininger and McFarland (2002) report that, to date, there is minimal research in the nursing literature that specifically examines the experience or needs of observant Jewish nurses or nursing students. A review of Jewish nursing literature since 1989 reveals that the majority of the current literature pertains to cultural sensitivity and awareness, and culturally competent care of the Orthodox Jewish patient. The articles published examined childbirth, child care and sexual practices in Orthodox Jewish women (Berkowitz, 2008; Ribner & Kleinplatz, 2007; Rothbell, 1989; Saucier Wodinsky, 2009). Additional publications focused on the special needs of Orthodox Jewish patients’ in home care, mental health and psychiatry and end of life issues (Prosser, Korman, & Feinstein, 2012; Ross & Hvizdash, 2002; Weinstein, 2003). This paucity of
research is also evident in searching the education literature for studies and instruments designed for empirical studies related to observant Jewish nurses and nursing students.

For observant Jews, the particulars of the Jewish religion and culture, practice, ritual and customs are anchoring lifelines while living in a rapidly changing world (Hirsch, 1996).

Ethnicity and culture are often used interchangeably, but these terms refer to different concepts. Ethnicity refers to “the social identity of a social group largely related to language, and national origin” (Leininger & McFarland, 1995). Culture, on the other hand refers to “the learned and shared knowledge of values, beliefs, norms and life ways of a particular group that help guide the individual or group in their thinking, decisions and actions in patterned ways” (Leininger & McFarland, 1995, p.95).

Furthermore, religion and culture may also intersect and reinforce one another, shaping both self-identification and general attitudes (Edgell & Tranby, 2010). As previously mentioned, there is a variety of structural and historical differences that affects culture and which, in turn, has ramifications for religious practices. According to Reimer (1995), religion focuses on ideology, whereas culture is influenced by history, frontiers, denominationalism in national population, geography and immigrant patterns or revolutions (Cousins, 1999; Reimer, 1995). In this classic study, Reimer (1995) compared the interconnectedness of religious beliefs and
practice and his research suggests a correlation between increased levels of religiosity through socialization, rituals and culture (Reimer, 1995). Rituals, the study of Jewish texts and abiding by the observance of customs and folkways are considered indispensable and essential elements of Jewish life. These differences need to be understood in order to recognize the value of the unique experiences of the observant Jewish nursing student (OJNS) in an academic setting.

**Jewish Observance**

There are three major religious sects within Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform (often called ‘Liberal’ or ‘Progressive’).

Orthodox Jews believe the Torah and its Halacha (laws) are unchanging and eternal.

Conservative Jews believe Halacha can be changed and Reform Jews believe the Torah and Halacha change and evolve with time and current events. Orthodox Jews live by both the written and oral Torah and its laws. Conservative Jews live by some selected parts of the oral Torah teachings and its laws and Reform Jews generally do not live by the oral Torah. In summation, Orthodox Jews are more conservative with maximum adherence to Jewish law, Conservative Jews practice at the median of the continuum and Reform Jews are at the most liberal and non-observant end of the spectrum. All of these sects of Judaism share an intimate connection to
culture and tradition, yet there is variation in daily practice and ritual perspective and
interpretation of Halacha (Jewish law) (Kadushin et al., 2005b).

The traditional definition of being of Jewish origin has traditionally been interpreted as
matrilineality, the offspring of a Jewish mother. Alternatively, a person can be adopted into the
culture or convert to Judaism, thus all those that identify with being Jewish may or may not have
ancestry or blood lineage to the Jewish people.

Orthodox or observant Jews’ tradition is embedded in all aspects of daily life. For
observant or Orthodox Jews, the Bible is not just an account of the Israelites “saga,” but a
guidebook for Jewish life and behavior (Schneerson, 1972). Orthodox observant Jews assert the
timelessness of their traditional way of life by literally “living” it, every day, every moment.

Jewish values may be characterized by a commitment to the laws of the Torah. Orthodox
Jews are steadfast in their devotion to the Torah and exacting in the practice of its laws as
opposed to the Conservative or Reform Jews who are more liberal in interpreting and adhering to
the laws of the Torah. Moral precepts such as neighborly love, human dignity, walking in G-d’s
ways which typically includes “Chesed” (acts of charity) and “Do right and good” (Deuteronomy
6:18) are principles and ideals that the vast majority of Jews regardless of affiliation or sects
follow as guiding values of their lives.
The word Jew comes from the Hebrew word “Yehudah” meaning, give thanks to G-d.

Being thankful is a Jews’ way of life. Furthermore, being an observant Jew means maintaining Jewish laws and customs dictated by the “Torah” (the first five books of the Bible) and its laws, such as the prohibition of working on the Sabbath (Saturday) or on the numerous holidays throughout the year. Observant Jews also integrate observance of strict dietary restrictions of “kashruth” (kosher) and the preservation of female and male modesty. The strictest of these movements is Orthodox Judaism, which considers G-d’s laws binding and unchangeable (Heilman, 2002). Adherence to these rules or traditions is defined as observance. Observant Judaism demands devotion and obedience.

Observant is defined as adhering strictly to the rules or rites of a certain culture. The word observant is defined by Webster’s dictionary as to watch, and to be mindful. As an observant person, one is to watch and be mindful of observing rites and customs. A short passage in Proverbs states “Know Him in all your ways” (Proverbs 3:6). This can be translated to signify that in all paths a person follows, it should be in relationship to knowing G-d and in all of life’s daily functions, do so in order to sanctify and honor G-d. Furthermore, the Kitzur Schulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), the standard definitive text for studying Jewish laws that are in regular practice today, describes being an observant Jew as the essence of one’s personal
condition. The text repeatedly states that “the accessing of one’s Jewishness is through observances” (Kitzur Schulchan Aruch, 8:36).

Orthodox Jews believe that G-d gave the oral and written Torah to the Jewish people and that those laws are binding and cannot be changed. This is different from the Conservative and Reform Jewish thought where the laws are subject to change with the changing times, and the oral Torah may or may not be acknowledged. The observance of Orthodox Jews is markedly different from Reform or Conservative Jews who may observe some Jewish laws (BarIlan, 2009). These levels of observances range across the continuum with Orthodox Jews as the most observant and Reform Jews as the least observant. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will focus on Orthodox Jewish nursing students who maintain the strictest of observant standards.

Orthodox Jews eat kosher, tend to live in neighborhoods near a synagogue and follow Jewish law and tradition closely. Orthodox observance of the Torah is most stringent in contrast to the other branches of Judaism. Orthodox Jews remain closest to maintenance of the laws and rules of the Torah from past millennia. Conservative Jews in contrast to Orthodox Jewry are in the middle of the continuum of observance and maintain varied observance with a traditional level of observance to the Torah law while embracing modernity. Although Halacha has been
practiced for thousands of years, Reform Jews are the least stringent and adhere to only select portions of the Torah and Halacha. For example, Reform Jews often do not keep the kosher dietary laws and can live far away from a Synagogue and may drive or work on the Sabbath (Cohen & Hill, 2007).

Due to its high birth rate, the Orthodox Jewish community is the fastest growing constituency of Jews (Levin, 2011; Shai, 2002). In contrast to many factions of Jewry who assimilate, Orthodox Jews have forestalled assimilation and have become a considerable group of over 600,000 people in the United States (Heilman, 2002). Members of the Orthodox Jewish community subscribe to a set of social norms that places great value on tradition and following the maximum observance of Jewish law.

**Dietary Laws**

The Dietary laws concerning observant Orthodox Jews include food preparation and consumption as well as which foods are forbidden. All through the year Orthodox Jews are aware of their Jewishness through complex dietary laws called “kashrut” derived from the word kosher. Kosher in Hebrew means “fit.” The term kosher originated in reference to the laws of animal slaughter (Leviticus, 11:1-31). Today, kosher includes fitness of all food for those who observe Jewish dietary laws. To be classified as kosher, an animal must both chew its cud and

31
have cloven hooves, birds must be non-predators and fish must have both fins and scales.

Shrimp, oysters, lobsters and any creature that crawls on the ground such as worms, snakes and reptiles are all prohibited. Observant Jews are forbidden from eating foods made with blood, because blood is synonymous with life (Deuteronomy, 12:21). Therefore to ingest any blood of any animal is strictly prohibited and all animals in order to be fit for eating, must be drained of blood as quickly as possible and washed clean.

Eggs and dairy products must come from animals that are kosher. Meat and milk or their by-products may not be eaten or cooked together. Milk and meat are kept separate in a kosher kitchen. Observant Jews have separate dishes, cookware and utensils for meat and dairy. A waiting period from one to six hours, depending on one’s custom, is needed in between eating meat and dairy.

Any prepared food must be kosher for use or consumption. Kosher certification is designated by recognized authorities to grant kosher certification. Fruits and vegetables are inherently kosher and do not require a “hechsher” as they are a natural product from G-d. However once a knife or any utensil from a non-kosher kitchen cuts or opens the produce or food the fruits, vegetables and food are deemed non-kosher. These kashrut laws that were established
millennia ago remain today for Orthodox observant Jews. This is in comparison to Conservative or Reform Jews who may or may not observe kashrut.

Prior to any meal in an observant Orthodox Jewish household, meals begin and end with prayer. Orthodox Judaism requires formal prayers three times a day and there are several fast days per Jewish calendar year when Orthodox Jews may neither eat nor drink. Additionally, there is the Jewish Sabbath (or Shabbos) as “the day of rest” which begins every Friday at sunset and ends approximately 72 minutes after sundown on Saturday evening (Talmud). Cooking is not permitted on the Sabbath, because lighting a flame or initiating electricity is prohibited and no electricity can be manually turned on or off, transportation on the Sabbath is on foot (Shulchan Aruch) as driving a motor vehicle is prohibited. The Sabbath is reserved as a day of prayer, reflection, Torah reading and rest. Generally the Orthodox members’ observance of Jewish holidays, follow similar rules as the Sabbath.

**Holiday Observance**

The Jewish calendar is lunar, with each month beginning with the new moon. All Jewish holidays begin on the evening before the calendar date. This is similar to the Sabbath (Shabbos), when the day begins and ends at sundown. Akin to the Sabbath, work is not permitted on most Jewish holidays. For observant Orthodox Jews who are employed within the secular world this
may become problematic in some instances. For example if all the non-working holidays fall on weekdays as they sometimes do, an observant Jew would have to take 13 days off from work, just to observe the holidays. Orthodox Jews do not conduct business, drive cars, handle money, or use technology (telephone, computers) on the Sabbath or holidays. The “day of rest” or celebration of holidays are times to put aside all worldly matters and enjoy family and a spiritual renewal.

Oftentimes the need to be able to walk to the synagogue on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays will be the determining factor for the close congregational communities that form within Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods. The Orthodox Jewish need for close geographical proximity lends itself to a stronger community where people know one another, worship together, shop and eat at local kosher shops and assist one another in times of need (Heilman, 2002). This close community arrangement is within the traditional Orthodox Jewish practices around the globe and is distinctly different from Conservative or Reform Jewish communities.

Orthodox Jews live within a community that gives the highest value to their history and they view tradition as a great teacher. Anthropologist Heilman describes this phenomenon specifically to Orthodox Jews as “traditioning” (Heilman, 1992). Heilman defined this process of traditioning as “never seeing the past as beyond retrieval but rather experiencing it as an
ongoing reverberation of the present” (Heilman, 1992 p.203). This can be further explained as

Orthodox Jews try to stay connected to past cultural practices as much as possible; this is reflected in their traditional values, dress and ways of life. This adherence to a time-honored way of life and its customs marks Orthodox Jews following the strictest adherence to Jewish law in contrast to the other branches of Judaism such as Reform or Conservative Jews.

**Orthodox Jewish Customs**

**Social Norms**

Many Orthodox Jewish communities have their own civil courts, volunteer police forces, volunteer fire departments, and even bus systems in order to reduce their contact with the outside world. Orthodox Jews, more than any other sect of Jews, hold their rites, rituals and traditions as an important part of their daily lives. Observant Orthodox Jews define themselves in terms of preserved difference. Another way Orthodox Jews observe their traditional way of life is through their manner of dress that particularly identifies them as observant Jews. These differences may manifest in terms of professed piety, modest or distinct dress, physical appearance, rituals and customs, demeanor and patterns of social interactions.

**Modesty Practice**

Modesty is a central principle applicable to almost every aspect of an observant Jewish life. This is most commonly evidenced by the distinct reserved style of dress, for both males and
females. Beginning from an early age, children are separated by gender while at school, to shield the girls from the boys and the boys from the girls and in order to preserve their modesty (Ribner & Kleinplatz, 2007). From childhood to adulthood, observant Orthodox men and women maintain modesty in practice and generally do not touch, gaze at or spend time in seclusion with the opposite gender other than their spouse or immediate family (Ribner & Kleinplatz, 2007).

Modesty (Tzneius) in Orthodox Judaism is a concept that encompasses moral conduct and behavior and has a correlation to the concept of humility. The prophet Micah (Micah, 6:8) provides an example of this broad view of modesty: “He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk modestly with your God.” Another reference to modesty (Tzneius) is Proverbs (11:2): “… but wisdom is with the unassuming [Tzenu’im],” that can be understood as being humble (“who conceal themselves out of their great humility” [Mezudat Zion]); or as referring to those who possess humility and self-discipline in their search for wisdom. It is these beliefs that frame the Orthodox Jews’ way of life and the manner in which they dress. In contrast to other branches of Judaism, Orthodox Jews are committed to the tenets and values of modesty in both their dress and behavior.
According to the Talmud, modesty is mandatory for both males and females. In terms of appearance and behavior, modesty should be practiced both in public and private domains. In practice, there is little unanimity among rabbinical authorities as to the specific boundaries of modesty. Modesty has been greatly influenced through the social norms and geographic differences of the Jewish people in diaspora (the exile of Jews from the Holy Land and their dispersal throughout the globe). One central idea that all Orthodox Jewish sages agree upon is the element of “ervah”. This is a concept that can be loosely translated to mean any part of a woman’s body that is customarily covered. The body is seen as something private and should be covered up from view and as a way to ensure that a woman be perceived for her inner beauty. Orthodox Jewish women refrain from wearing slacks, cover their clavicles, elbows and knees and refrain from wearing form fitting or revealing clothing (Falk, 1998).

In a study by Scheinberg-Andrews (2011) exploring the concept of Jewish modesty from Jewish women’s perspective, the author formulates five attributes of modesty: how one dresses, how one acts, a personal belief in the value of modesty, one’s upbringing in a particular culture and the interaction between people.

---

2 Diaspora connotes existence of Jews on foreign soil of a community in exile considered to be transitory (Safran, 2005)
Included in the modesty principle, which Orthodox Jews take very seriously, is to avoid physical contact between the genders in an endearing manner. The Talmud recommends gender separation to further safeguard this prohibition. Unique to Orthodox Jewish events, men and women are seated separately and mixed dancing is strictly prohibited (Heller, 2004). Physical contact between men and women is permissible in cases of medical emergency or health care treatment (Scheinberg Andrews, 2011). However, under normal circumstances, mixed dance parties or handshakes between sexes is not culturally acceptable to Orthodox Jews. Conservative, Reform or non-affiliated Jews may or may not wear slacks, short sleeves or form fitting clothing and there is no reluctance of physical contact between genders. These differences in dress and modesty behaviors may differentiate the Orthodox Jewish nursing student from his or her peers.

Another aspect of the social norms within the Jewish and more specifically the observant Jewish community is the role and function of the Rabbi or Rov. The following review of the Rabbi’s role and identity will address their involvement in the many facets of the observant Jewish daily life.

**The Rov or Rebbe**

Orthodox Jewish communities are usually organized around a particular rabbinic leader often called “The Rebbe” or “The Rov.” This is in contrast to other branches of Judaism such as
Reform or Conservative where communities are not based upon the proximity of a synagogue or a particular Rabbi and consulting a Rabbi concerning circumstances is uncommon. Orthodox Jews more than their Conservative or Reform Jewish counterparts rely on their Rabbi or Rebbe as a trusted counselor, spiritual teacher and guide. Consultation with the senior Rabbi or one of his associates will precede the majority of decisions in all areas of Orthodox Jewish life. This will include such circumstance such as marriage, work, schooling and health care decisions (BarIlan, 2009; Coleman-Brueckheimer, Spitzer, & Koffman, 2009; Freund, Cohen, & Azaiza, 2014). The majority of Conservative and Reform Jews will seek a Rabbi in times of crisis, or with regards to a health care decision, an Orthodox Jew will seek rabbinical council for every aspect of their daily lives.

There are a myriad of biblical and Halacha (Jewish law) commandments that regulate observant Jews daily routine. The Halacha (Jewish law) is predominantly behavioral and legalistic with strict and complete adherence to behavioral practices (Siev & Cohen, 2007). The rabbinical leader acts as a consultant and guide with respect to all areas of life and is turned to for solutions and guidance (Popovsky, 2010). Within Orthodox Judaism the Rabbi is considered a living mentor for contemporary existence and offers moral guidance in all aspects of daily life (Heilman, 2002). It is for this reason that observant Orthodox Jews consult their Rabbi as a
socially sanctioned means of decision-making contiguous with their religious and cultural values (Coleman-Brueckheimer et al., 2009; Siev & Cohen, 2007). This underscores the importance of the Rabbi or Rov among Orthodox Jewish communities. The role and responsibilities of the Orthodox Rabbi are, among others, to be a leader both within the Jewish community and act as an external representative of the Jewish community. This role of the Rabbi is distinct and unique amongst Orthodox Jews in contrast to other branches of Judaism.

Finally, Orthodox Jewish communities who strictly follow the written and oral laws of the Torah may seem to have little interest integrating into modern society (Rokach, Chin & Shared, 2012). In particular, in high density neighborhoods of observant Orthodox Jews, there is a greater chance that Jews will interact with other Jews, as friends and as neighbors (Heilman, 2002). Jews living in high density Orthodox Jewish communities do so because their religious practices and commitments may be better satisfied within this insular environment. According to the Jewish American Yearbook (Dashefsky & Sheskin, 2013) the highest concentration of Jews outside of Israel is the Northeastern region of the United States (U.S.). Consequently the observant Jewish nursing student in the Northeast area of the U.S. may have little to no familiarity or integration into secular society. Therefore there might be a greater potential for enrollment of observant nursing students to come from an insular reality to a secular reality. This
movement from an insular community to a secular and more diverse community may affect differences in the student’s perception of the academic environment relative to their cultural norms. The findings of this research can offer insights into this particular minority group of nursing students.

**Minority Nursing Students**

Many studies about cultural minority nursing students examine students enrolled in a Bachelor’s degree in nursing. This section reviews the literature of minority nursing students within the United States and abroad (Love, 2010; McDermott-Levy, 2011; Meadus & Twomey, 2011; Morales, 2010; Oguntebi, Shcherbakova, & Wooten, 2012). Facts and observations pertaining to nursing students in countries other than the United States will be expanded in the paragraphs below to provide insight into the experience of nursing education in different cultural settings.

Orthodox Jewish nursing students comprise a cultural and faith-based minority group that because of dress, tradition and religious customs may appear to be different from their peers. While the particulars of the experience of Orthodox Jewish nursing students has not yet been studied, nurse scientists have explored other cultural and faith-based minority nursing students within the United States. Japanese graduate nursing students reported that there were role and
power differences in nursing between the United States and Japan (Doutrich, 2001). This study illuminated the interactions of this particular group of minority students and the difference in cultural nuances that affected their interactions with clinical nursing instructors, registered nurses, and their student peers, thus impacting their academic experience.

In a study by McDermott-Levy (2011) the author describes the lived experience of female Arab-Muslim nursing students studying for their baccalaureate degree in nursing in the United States. The religious customs, dietary needs and specific dress of these nursing students and their needs for accommodation of those needs were illustrated by McDermott-Levy’s work. For example, the Arab-Muslim students described that when wearing the head scarf (hijab) they experienced a decrease in communication from others with the assumption that they did not speak English. The Muslim students also expressed difficulty in arranging prayers for washing prior to prayer (wudu) and the challenges of not wearing revealing clothing or avoiding the consumption of alcohol. The Arab-Muslim nurses shared their frustration of finding ritually slaughtered meat (halal) and the management of fasting and prayers during Ramadan (McDermott-Levy, 2011). This study describes the religious, cultural and educational adaptation of Arab-Muslim female nursing students from Oman and discussed how their experiences can
enlighten educators. McDermott-Levy recommends raising awareness of the students’ experience in order to inform faculty.

The lived experience of male nursing students, a minority group within nursing, has also been examined (Medus & Twomey, 2011). Meadus and Twomey (2011) explored the phenomenon of male nursing students in a predominantly female-concentrated undergraduate baccalaureate nursing program. The experiences of the students revealed issues related to bias in nursing education, practice areas, and societal perceptions that nursing is not a suitable career choice for men. Implications for nurse educators and strategies for the recruitment and retention of male nursing students are discussed. It is important to consider the lived experience of male nursing students as a foundation of studying other minority groups of nursing students. This preliminary study recommends that the educational needs and experiences of nursing students meet the diversity of the student population (Meadus & Twomey, 2011).

Another minority nursing student group to consider is the African American nursing student. The lived experience of African American nursing students at a predominantly white university has been explored (Love, 2010). This study describes their encounters with discrimination, and the need for these nursing students to “talk white” and their desire to socialize to the dominant norm while “feeling different” from their peers. The students faced
stereotyping yet they described their desire of academic achievement together with the support of family and communities which were themes illustrated in Love’s work. The African American nursing students in this study expressed their need to authenticate their cultural identities over the valued dominant norms (Love, 2010). The experiences of these African American nursing students provide insight into the lived experience of this particular minority nursing group and Love recommends raising awareness to help inform nurse educators and academic faculty.

Similarly, it is the hope of the researcher that illuminating the experience of the OJNS may raise awareness and inform nurse educators and academic faculty of this group of nursing students.

Observant Orthodox Jewish nursing students may find themselves in similar situations to McDermott-Levy and Medus and Twomey and Love’s studies. Orthodox Jewish nursing students, similar to the male nursing students in Meadus and Twomey’s research may experience the societal perceptions that nursing is not a suitable career or may experience bias. Similar to the Arab-Muslim nursing students in McDermott-Levy’s work, Orthodox Jewish nursing students have considerable religious needs that need accommodation. Orthodox Jewish nursing students, comparably to the African American nursing students in Love’s research, have distinct ethnic and cultural differences that may create biases.
These researchers have been investigating cultural diversity and studying the experiences of minority nursing students within academia. The work to date has been largely focused on traditional minority groups. Currently there is an underrepresentation of studies focusing on faith-based minority depiction (Oguntebi, Shcherbakova, & Wooten, 2012). Studying the lived experience of Orthodox observant Jewish nursing students will contribute to the research of faith-based minorities in academia.

More than half a century of theoretical foundational underpinning exists to support cultural diversity in nursing education and practice (Leininger, 1998). According to the United States department of Health Resources and Services Administration, nurses are slowly becoming more diverse over time. The proportion of culturally diverse nurses has increased from 20 to 25 percent, a 25-percent increase during the last decade (hrsa.gov). Culturally diverse faculty may contribute favorably to the experience of the cultural minority nursing student (Parker & McMillan, 2008).

Cultural differences and similarities may impact the nursing students’ experience within the academic setting, clinical area and when they move forward as professional nurses. Race, ethnicity and culture may influence the essence of an individual or group experience (Morales, 2010). According to a study of Latino nursing students’ faculty, it is imperative to recognize and
respond to the importance of values, and beliefs of culturally diverse students within academic environments (Nadeau, 2014). As already noted, there is a need to increase diversity within the nursing profession in order to meet the needs of expanding culturally diverse communities (IOM, 2003; Sullivan Commission, 2004). Gaining an understanding of the OJNS experience, this research has the potential to enhance sensitivity of nurse educators, administrators and practicing nurses who may come into contact with this minority group.

Today, cultural awareness and sensitivity may be used to enhance curricula for nursing programs in the United States. Nurse scholars over the past several decades have provided a foundation for transcultural practice and cultural competence; however, the underlying concern of stereotyping different cultures may defeat the original purpose of creating cultural sensitivity.

Leininger and McFarland (2002) report that there is no research in the nursing literature that specifically examines the experiences of observant Jews. A review of the nursing literature since 2004 reveals that most of the current literature pertains to culturally competent care of the orthodox Jewish patient. This paucity of research is also evident when researching the psychology, psychiatry and education literature for studies, articles or psychometric tools for empirical studies of observant Jewish student populations. It is important to formally examine
the observant Jewish nursing students’ experience in an effort to meet their needs and promote awareness and understanding of the specific and unique needs of this cultural group.

The research regarding the experience of cultural and ethnic minorities in the United States is limited considering that, according to the American Association Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2011), the percentage of students who self-identified as minority in pre-licensure baccalaureate programs during 2010 was 26.6%. The development of educational programs and the faculty’s appreciation of the influential role they have in educating diverse nursing students are essential.

The projection of the United States census bureau is that by the year 2060, minorities, in particular, Black, Hispanic, Native American and Pacific Islanders will comprise 56% of the U.S. population, making them the dominant population and subsequently the workforce will be changed (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Although faith-based minorities are not included in the data from the census bureau, it is Jews that have a long tradition of being a minority and have their own account of the effects of being a minority on the freedom to practice their religion (Kadushin & Tighe, 2008). It is important to engage the nurse educator in reflection that focuses on appreciating and valuing diversity, including faith-based minorities.
Nurse educators have influence enhancing the minority students' clinical and classroom experience (Sedgwick, Oosterbroek, & Ponomar, 2014).

Students’ expectations of their faculty members can also influence student-faculty interactions (McDermott-Levy, 2011). Nursing education, similar to other educational programs, such as medicine and allied health, has a clinical component where the student interacts with patients, their families, health care personnel and their clinical educator. As the United States becomes increasingly culturally diverse, the cultural mix of patients cared for in hospitals, community clinics and health homes also changes (Leishman, 2004). However, nursing remains an overwhelmingly white female workforce (Jones, Cason, & Bond, 2004) and this difference may create challenges for the future of the nursing profession (Alpers & Hanssen, 2013).

As nursing students continue to cross cultural boundaries for opportunities in higher education, educators must be aware of the multiple factors that influence students’ education (McDermott-Levy, 2011). Oguntebi and colleagues proposed creating diverse learning environment in education and called for the developing of a minority pipeline of faculty (Oguntebi et al., 2012). Although there has been literature to support the need to develop and prepare nurse educators to better meet the needs of multicultural students (Leininger & McFarland, 2002) these important concepts and ideas are beyond the scope of this study.
As previously mentioned in the review of the literature, there is limited nursing research in the area of the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student. Leininger and McFarland (2002) reported within nursing practice and nursing education the need to study individual minority groups to better understand their experiences within nursing school and health care. Consequently, this descriptive phenomenological study may provide information that can further the sensitivity of nurse educators relevant to this particular cultural group and may perhaps translate to other minority groups.

**Philosophy and Methodology**

**Husserl**

The body of evidence reviewed indicates that research has not been conducted on the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student. This stated phenomenon, and the reason for this study is to gain an understanding of the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student. Using a descriptive phenomenological approach may help reveal the essential themes of their lived experiences.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is recognized as the father of phenomenology. According to Husserl, philosophy can be defined as the analysis of beliefs as they are conceptualized and formulated (Husserl, 1913 / 1962). Philosophy, in Greek *philosophia*, signifies the “love of
wisdom” and an overall belief system. As a belief system, philosophy can be viewed as a framework for understanding epistemological, ontological or methodological assertions.

The term phenomenology originates from the Greek words *phainomenon* (an appearance) and *logos* (reason). This study will be based on descriptive phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology grew out of a need to understand life as it is experienced. Descriptive phenomenological philosophy emphasizes that reality is experiential and knowledge is grounded in the experience (Husserl, 1913/1962). Another definition of phenomenology is a “theoretical perspective aimed at generating knowledge in how people experience things” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Philosophy provides a structure of inquiry in terms of the nature of reality, ways of coming to know, and methods of knowing. A philosophy provides insightful perspectives of how phenomena can be known (epistemological), identifies phenomena of interest (ontological), and optimal methods used to perceive the knowledge of those phenomena (methodological). Philosophy also guides the methods used to obtain knowledge about the world concerning the phenomena of interest, such as induction or deduction, guess, intuition, or hunch. Thus, philosophy, a belief system, becomes the ultimate foundation for the scientific enterprise (Kim, 2010).
Husserl was the founder of descriptive phenomenology. He advocated that science needed a philosophy because philosophy was made of ontology (the nature and relationship of being) and epistemology (the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge) (Husserl, 1913/1962). Ontologically, Husserl believed, “Natural knowledge begins with experience (Erfahrung) and remains within experience” (Husserl, 1913/1962 p. 45). Husserl further described knowledge as being grounded in experiences and professed that reality is experiential. Phenomenology begins with non-verbal awareness and moves towards studying the overall subjective experiences.

Husserl discussed that an individual’s personal experience comprised both individual “fact,” the “accidental” experience and essence, “the essential universality” ((Husserl, 1962 p. 47). Husserl described phenomenological research as a means to understand experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions. He further explains the person’s descriptions provide the foundation for a reflective structural analysis to depict the essence of the experiences. Initially, the original data are comprised of naïve descriptions acquired through open-ended questions and dialogue. The researcher then depicts the structure of the experiences based on reflection and interpretation of the participant's story. The intent is to establish the general meaning of the experience for those who have had the experience. The essential structures of experience are
experienced subjectively by an individual and intersubjective by individuals with a similar experience. This is notable when considering this study of the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students, as an individual subjective and intersubjective experience.

Husserl defined phenomenology with three main ideas in *Logical Investigations* (Husserl, 1901). First, he discusses how a person’s reality is viewed through his or her personal experience. Although people may share a similar experience, the totality of the experience of each person may be different because every person’s reality may be different. Husserl (1913 / 1962) theorized that a person’s consciousness is realm of absolute being. He writes “Consciousness in itself has a being of its own which in its absolute uniqueness of nature remains unaffected” (Husserl, 1962, p. 102). Only through the act of experiencing events with reflection, do we know the world of “the stream of experience” (Husserl, 1962, p. 203).

Phenomenological inquiry provides the foundation and infrastructure where new knowledge is gleaned through an understanding of the particulars of a person’s subjective experiences.

Second, Husserl considered experience as intentional, with each experience being purposeful and individualized. Every experience has a purpose and we do not encounter events aimlessly with haphazardness, even the most mundane event has a purpose and intent. This distinct approach of reflection and finding meaning in every event and experience as purposeful
can expand the knowledge and understanding of the experiences of the observant Jewish nursing students. As the observant Jewish nursing students who will participate in this study reflect on their lived experience, the researcher with reasoned inquiry will discover the essences of their experiences. This gained knowledge will provide insight and information and illustrate for nursing educators and others the lived experience of the nursing students participating in this study.

Finally, Husserl examines the essences of experience, meaning a person’s experience can be described and the description of the experience can be termed as the “essence” of the experience. The study of essences aims to determine how similar experiences are recognized as such, as the objective of phenomenology is to capture the essence of the individual experiences. Phenomenology has come to be known as the reasoned inquiry to discover the essence of experiences (Husserl, 1913/1962).

The phenomenologist moves from the science of essences to a concern with the meaning of the experience. A phenomenological inquiry in research is appropriate when the intent is to capture a complex and detailed understanding of an issue. Phenomenological research is applicable when gathering and comprehending the stories and experiences of a specific
population and to reach beyond existing theories of an issue or to establish a new theory (Creswell, 2009).

Within phenomenological inquiry the researcher will study the key characteristics of an experience that may categorize an event with the unique nuances of the particulars of the experience. Thus this particular group of nursing students’ may have an important experience to share as the essence of their universal experience may be unique. This phenomenological study will shed light on the uniqueness of that experience.

Descriptive phenomenology may be used to understand cultural aspects of participants’ attitudes, values and social interactions that otherwise may not be articulated and can be an influencing factor in a person’s experience (Santos & Chess, 2003). Cultural aspects of an experience have been described as an individual’s subconscious perception of events through a cultural lens (Creswell, 2009). This is especially pertinent to a study focusing on the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student.

Based on the limited body of literature and knowledge about the observant Jewish nursing students’ lived experience, this phenomenon of interest remains silent and underdeveloped within the United States. An aim of this study is to illuminate the observant Jewish nursing students’ experience.
An overview of phenomenology as a method as well as research design and procedures will be discussed in the following chapter. Analysis and ethical considerations will be provided in the next section of the research and design methods of this proposed study. Included in the discussion will be preliminary biases and limitations to this qualitative phenomenological study.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction to Method

This chapter includes the research methodology for this study. The research methods and design followed by a description of the participants and recruitment are discussed. Data collection, management and analysis will be detailed, along with ethical considerations. This chapter will conclude with conventional knowledge, personal beliefs and limitations.

This study utilized a descriptive phenomenological method based on Husserl’s phenomenology to better understand the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing students in the Northeastern region of the United States.

A descriptive phenomenological study is based on Husserl's (Husserl, 1913/1962) philosophy. This method advocates for the exploration of critical structures (essences) of a person’s experience as an attainable and new source of scientific knowledge (Husserl, 1913/1962; Leavy, 2011). Descriptive phenomenology is based on the belief that the human experience is comprised of meaningful elements that are intentional, subjective, and personal. (Husserl). Personal experience is not a random set of ‘happenings’. Each person’s life experience has an essence and an individual does not merely have an experience but is also conscious of the
experience and recognizes himself as the subject of that experience as well as his being
conscious of the intention of that experience (Creswell, 2009; Husserl1913/1962; Leavy, 2011).

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a German Jewish philosopher and mathematician is
considered to be the founder of phenomenology as a philosophy and as a descriptive approach to
the research of inquiry (Parse, 2001). Husserl’s approach was that consciousness was the central
condition of all human experience. Husserl’s insights lead to a new philosophy and a new
approach to scientific inquiry of the lived experience (Moran, 2013).

In his book *Logical Investigations*, Husserl (1901) describes phenomenology as the
science of the essence of consciousness. Husserl believed that the meaning of a person’s lived
experience was through the first-person perspective and by way of a one-to-one transaction
between the participant and the researcher. According to Husserl and others who used this
phenomenological investigational approach, interactions or transactions must include
observation and attentive listening in order to capture the essence of the personal perception of
the experience (Husserl, 1913/1962; Leavy, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Little is known about the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student,
therefore a phenomenological method of inquiry is appropriate to explore the phenomenon. In
order to fully understand the experience of the observant Jewish nursing student it is important to use a qualitative methodology and allow for their experiences to emerge in their own voices.

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological research is to describe the essential structures (common patterns) of the observant Jewish nursing students’ experience of their day-to-day life and is based on the assumption that the participant is the source of the information.

**Rationale for Descriptive Phenomenology Method**

The descriptive phenomenological method is structured to capture the essence of a phenomenon as it exists in the life-world or the world of an experience as it is lived by the individual (Husserl, 1913/1962). Edmund Husserl’s philosophical framework, methodological approach and data analysis will be utilized for this study. Husserl professes that descriptive phenomenological inquiry uncovers the essential essences of the particular experience. A descriptive phenomenological approach has been used to gain a deep and fundamental understanding of the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students enrolled in a baccalaureate nursing program in the East Coast region of the United States.

**Development and Emergence (Husserl)**

In qualitative studies, the ongoing process of questioning is an integral part of understanding the unfolding lives and perspectives of others (Agee, 2009). Phenomenology is an
inductive qualitative research tradition rooted in the 20th century work of Edmund Husserl.

Husserl introduced the idea of the life-world as the arena of phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 2009). Descriptive phenomenology aims to explore and gain an understanding of the lived experiences and to uncover the essence of the experience. The study of the experience of perception, thoughts and emotions surrounding an event was the focus of Husserl’s work. Descriptive phenomenology as a research method was utilized to gain insight into the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing students directly examining their particular experiences.

Husserl developed descriptive phenomenology, where conscious experiences are described while preconceived opinions are set aside or “bracketed” by the researcher. Descriptive phenomenology is used when the researcher describes the phenomenon under study and brackets their biases so as not to influence the description of the phenomenon at hand. The process of bracketing has been described as (a) separating and an in depth inspection of the phenomenon; (b) dissecting the phenomenon in order to unravel and define and analyze the phenomena of interest; and (c) suspending all preconceived notions of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Husserl believed that through bracketing it is possible to gain insight into the common features of any lived experience. Bracketing is an attempt to approach a lived
experience with “newness” in order to elicit rich and meaningful data. When the researcher effectively brackets or sets aside one’s beliefs, feelings and preconceived notions of the phenomenon, the researcher can better reach the true essence of the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2009). Husserl referred to the essential elements of a phenomenon as universal essences or eidetic structures and considered them to represent the true nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Husserl, 1913/1962).

Descriptive phenomenological inquiry, as a reflective process, underscores the strengths of a qualitative approach to research. At the center of this approach are methods for representing what Leavy describes as the infinitesimal details of the social and cultural aspects of people’s lives (Leavy, 2011). Since this research will be based on the observant Jewish nursing students lived experience, the descriptive phenomenological approach is appropriate. Creswell (2009) noted that in qualitative studies the ongoing process of understanding the unfolding lives and perspectives of others is an integral part of the research process. It is the intention of this qualitative research to focus on the perspectives of the observant Jewish nursing students and their lived experience.
This descriptive phenomenological method will answer the following research question:

What is the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student in the East-coast region of the United States?

**Research Procedure**

**Participant Sample**

The voices of the observant Jewish nursing students who have lived the experience of being junior or senior nursing students in a baccalaureate nursing program in the East Coast region of the United States illuminated the phenomenon of interest. A convenient purposive sample of observant Jewish nursing students, enrolled as juniors or seniors in a baccalaureate degree nursing program in the Eastern region of the United States were recruited to participate in this study. The participants met the requirements of being at least 18 years of age, having the ability to speak and understand the English language and having the ability to provide written informed consent. Students were enrolled in a baccalaureate nursing program in the Northeastern region of the United States and reside within the region. Participants who met the criteria were asked to participate in this research study.

Each of the participants self-identified as being an observant Jew maintaining an observant Jewish lifestyle to include Sabbath and holiday observances, modesty practices and dietary laws or “kashrut.” The exclusion criteria were orthodox Jewish male nursing students or
Jewish students who do not identify as being observant, those who cannot provide written informed consent and those who were unable to speak and understand the English language. The researcher maintained control over the selection sample to ensure the participants are appropriate for inclusion in this study. Setting strict inclusion criteria will support having similar participants in this study, but may also be a limitation to this study and might distort research analysis and findings (Creswell, 2009).

An all-female sample was used in this study because there are no published studies to date that specifically address the experiences of female observant Jewish nursing students in the United States. Furthermore, some Orthodox Jewish women may be accustomed to a culture where men and women are kept apart in schools, places of worship and in their communities. Thus, the observant Orthodox Jewish women’s experience may differ from men’s experience as well as from other cultural minority groups.

In a phenomenological study, the sample size is determined by the quality of the interviews and when data saturation is achieved. Data saturation is reached when the researcher begins to hear the same information reported from multiple participants (Creswell, 2009). The in-depth phenomenological interview employed a few participants sharing a similar phenomenon and can produce rich data of the experience with the stories of relatively few participants (Rubin
Phenomenological studies using purposive sampling have achieved data saturation with 10-12 participants (Creswell, 2009; Fu, 2005). Small sample sizes are common in qualitative research focused on meaning instead of larger sample sizes needed for generalizability (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

**Recruitment**

Purposive sampling was used as the sampling recruitment method for this study. Purposive sampling is used most commonly in phenomenological inquiry with individuals selected to participate based on their knowledge of the phenomena of interest (Creswell, 2009; Leavy, 2011). Purposive, non-random sampling is used in order to ensure that appropriate participants share the experience of this phenomenon. This sampling method has been selected based upon this research phenomenon of understanding the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students.

This author used interpersonal relationships with various schools of nursing and social networks to contact potential respondents. This researcher posted flyers in synagogues, Jewish recreational centers and distributed invitations to participate within organized Jewish clubs on college campuses (i.e. Hillel). The researcher also contacted colleagues within various schools of nursing to recruit potential participants. This recruitment technique was employed in this
study because this researcher is a member of this particular cultural and religious minority, the researcher had access to the members of this community. This also helped gain the trust of this insular community. Recruitment was accomplished through emails, social networking and referrals within the Orthodox Jewish community.

The number of interviews in similar studies when data saturation is usually reached is between 7 and upwards of 15 participants (Creswell, 2009; Leavy, 2011). Recruitment for participants continued until data saturation was achieved. The researcher contacted prospective participants by telephone or email to screen for inclusion criteria and verify if the participant had any questions while confirming a meeting time and venue (Appendix A). Interviews were conducted at a location of the participant’s choosing. The duration of the interview was one to two hours for each participant.

Data Management

The researcher used a digital recorder to record each interview. This data was then saved on an electronic memory card. The external storage media (memory card) is compatible with the portable recording device that can easily be removed for access to a personal computer. After each interview, the researcher transferred the recorded file to a secure network and a password protected personal computer. Immediately after each interview, the researcher wrote a personal
memo observation of the participant’s interview setting as well as any other pertinent information. Transcribing one interview before conducting the next interview was an effective strategy to assure accurate and truthful descriptive summaries and reinforce delineation of participant data.

After transcribing each interview, the researcher used a numerical code to correlate with the participant. All external storage media, paper memos of interviews, any hard copies of transcriptions and personal journals were kept in a locked file cabinet; the researcher will retain all memory-sticks, transcripts, and journals.

Data Collection

Data collection procedures included the use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility of scope and depth, while keeping the focus on the phenomenon of interest. To determine the lived experience of the participant, the phenomenon of interest must have already occurred. Therefore interviews were conducted with observant Jewish nursing students who are currently enrolled as juniors or seniors in a baccalaureate nursing program. Interviews were used as a means of collecting an account of events experienced as observant Jewish nursing students in a baccalaureate degree nursing program. The participants’ age, confirmation of religious affiliation, level of observance and
personal contact information were collected as part of the demographic questionnaire (Appendix D). The demographic questionnaire was completed by each participant at the time of her interview.

Participants of the study maintained their student status within their school of nursing while participating in this study. Husserlian phenomenological tradition notes that the researcher engages in bracketing personal beliefs to avoid biases within the study (Husserl, 1913/1962). Developing a phenomenological bracket in order to conduct phenomenological descriptive research requires setting aside or bracketing conventional knowledge during data collection and analysis (Fu, 2005; Husserl, 1931/1962).

In depth interviewing is a common method of collecting data for qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2009; Leavy, 2011; Parse, 2001). Engaged listening and active asking are appropriate methods of interviewing when a researcher is focused on a particular phenomenon and requires understanding from individuals who will be interviewed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The in-depth interview is a form of dialogue with the researcher asking questions and engaging in probes during the interview. This type of semi-structured interview process assists in guiding the conversation and allows for the participant to talk about areas of importance to them. This format
puts the participant at the center of the interview process and recognizes the interviewee as the content expert of his or her experience (Leavy, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The data collection and interview process should be gathered in a natural setting in order to maintain authenticity regarding human behavior and allow for the most comfortable situation for the participant as possible. Open ended, semi-structured one-on-one interviews in a private space of the participants’ choosing will facilitate openness of the participants and increase their engagement in the interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). According to Creswell (2013), “qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive and research should take place in a natural setting” (pp. 181-182) and continues to recommend that in-depth interviews as a data collection method are essential for studies that focus on the lived experience. The interview duration was one to two hours for each participant.

Interview questions are frequently unstructured, using open-ended questions (Creswell, 2013); this study will use such semi-structured questions. This type of interview serves to elicit depth, range and specificity of personal context of possible responses (Salzmann-Erikson, 2013). It permits interviewees to “voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspective of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell, 2009, p. 203) and allows interviewers to capture the deep meaning of the experience in the participants’ own words. This interview method also
helps participants express their experiences by prompting their reflections and allows for probing questions within the interview process.

Open-ended interview questions were developed to help guide the interview process as well as the opportunity to ask situational questions and use probes to elicit additional information when appropriate (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The semi-structured interview questions are formulated to meet the needs of the research process (Fu, 2008; Salzmann-Erikson, 2013). Asking the participants the same or similar questions assures the emergence of similar data and is considered a strong indicator for the reliability of data collection (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Salzmann-Erikson, 2013). The initial question was broad and open-ended, followed by probing questions.

Interview questions included:

1) Please describe what it is like being an observant Jewish nursing student studying in a baccalaureate nursing program?

   Probing Questions:

2) What are your thoughts about studying in an academic environment within a nursing program? Can you describe what that is like (the experience)?
3) What is the classroom experience at the university for you? Can you describe that?

4) What are / were your clinical experiences like? Can you describe these?

5) What else can you tell me about your experience as an observant Jewish nursing student?

6) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience?

Through in-depth interviews, participants can share personal reflections of their experience. An important aspect of qualitative research is that the researcher is the key instrument of data collection. The researcher will be the only person interviewing the participants, and this is expected to enhance the reliability of the data obtained. Data obtained from the participants may be considered free of influence from possible differences in interviewing style or in a difference in personalities of interviewers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Salzmann-Erikson, 2013).

**Analysis**

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student. Understanding the experiences of these students necessitates a Husserlian descriptive phenomenological approach of inquiry. This method is based on main themes of
Husserl's phenomenology (Husserl, 1913/1962): intentionality, the essences or essential structures of experience, the world of experience, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity. The intentionality of the experience makes it possible to study the stream of experience through individuals’ particular experience and identify the essential structures of the experience with all the participants. The intentionality of experience makes it possible for descriptive phenomenological research to study the experience of the observant Jewish nursing student but also to describe the experience.

Descriptive phenomenological study based on Husserl's (Husserl, 1913/1962) philosophy provides “a piece of pure description… we mean ideas of every kind” (Husserl, p. 95). In order to provide a pure description of the experience, a phenomenologist needs to “bracket” or suspend their preconceived ideas about the research subject. The phenomenological reduction is achieved through disconnecting and “bracketing” or suspending “the general thesis which belongs to the essence” (p. 99) relevant to the experience that is being studied.

Husserl describes this process in great detail as disconnecting with all that the researcher may understand about the experience that is being studied. The information remains within the bracket, disconnected and outside of the researcher’s frame of reference. Husserl describes this ability of the researcher to set aside as if it were “out of action” and “disconnected,” which
enables the phenomenological researcher to view the data through the lens of the person who has lived the particular experience.

Reflection is one of the central methods of Husserl’s descriptive phenomenological study. “Phenomenological method proceeds entirely through acts of reflection” (Husserl, 1913/1962, p. 197). Through reflection, a phenomenologist reduces the possibility to “first of all recapitulate what we already know, and seek at once to penetrate deeper into the facts of the case” (p. 197). Husserl viewed reflection as “recollection” (p. 200) of events that unfold including the discovery of the essences. Reflection makes it possible for the phenomenological researcher to proceed to the descriptive analysis of the experience.

To ensure a deep understanding of the uniqueness of each participant's experience and the experiences common to all participants, a descriptive phenomenological method consisting of four phases were used. The work of Husserl has been extrapolated by others (Fu, Xu, Liu & Haber, 2005; Fu, 2008) to develop his phenomenological philosophy as a blueprint to analyze data. This technique includes four phases: developing a bracket, gathering data, analyzing data and discussion of the findings (Fu et al. 2008).
Table 1.0: A Descriptive Phenomenological Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of the Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase I</td>
<td>to prepare the descriptive phenomenological study through reflection and phenomenological reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II</td>
<td>to gather data by immersing in the life-world of multiple participants’ experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase III</td>
<td>to conduct a descriptive data analysis in a reflective and intuitive way that enables a description of the essential structures of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase IV</td>
<td>to discuss the findings by integrating the bracketed knowledge and relevant literature as well as provide implications for future research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Phase I, the data preparation phase in which the researcher prepares to study the topic of interest through reflection. This first phase also consists of preparing the structure of the descriptive phenomenological study through a deep and detailed literature review and phenomenological reduction or developing a phenomenological bracket. Husserl likened the phenomenological reduction to a “disconnection from nature” which allows the experience to exist with “its pure meaning unimpaired” (Husserl, 1962 p. 155). Through the phenomenological reduction, the experience is considered new, as if it’s a fresh start. For the researcher the data of the participants’ experience are new and all information that has been previously gleaned is “bracketed” (Creswell, 2009).

Phase II includes verbatim transcription of the interviews and entering the interviews into a computer software database (NVivo). The audio recordings of the interview transcripts were
listened to several times while comparing them to the written transcript data to ensure accuracy.

The data were then entered into the software database (NVivo). NVivo is specifically designed software for qualitative data used to manage the voluminous data associated with qualitative studies. A feature of NVivo is the ability to highlight data and easily code the data. NVivo computer software facilitates coding of interview data used in qualitative research. This software system ensures the trustworthiness and audit trail of the data analysis.

The researcher listened to the interviews while reading the transcription of the data being cognizant of the philosophy of voice and listening for audible sounds such as “Um,” “Ah,” a soft laugh or times of silence within the interview. These essential non-verbal “habitual modes of expression” are of importance to the qualitative researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Following all interviews, the field notes assisted in identification of potential themes from the interviews.

Phase III consists of descriptive data analysis in a reflective and intuitive way that enables the description of the essential structures of the lived experience of the participant. In alignment with Husserlian descriptive phenomenological methodology, meanings and themes will be identified by “comparing and distinguishing, collecting and counting, presupposing and inferring” (Husserl, 1962, p. 93). As the data were analyzed, the researcher wrote memos and
explored patterns in the data. Writing memos facilitates thinking and stimulates analytic insights (Leavy, 2011; Parse, 2001).

Tables were used to collapse the data from participant centric to codes and essential essences or themes. Husserl (1931/1962, p. 47) uses essences or themes as a universal attribute, “whatever belongs to the essence of the individual can also belong to another individual, and the broadest generalities of essential being.” This researcher focused on the essences of the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing students and allowed for their voices to emerge.

Finally, this author worked with a member of the dissertation committee who is a qualitative researcher to assist in examining the data, comparing identified codes and discuss interpretation and inductively developed themes. Furthermore, there was another reviewer of the data who acted as a third coder as a measure of inter-rater reliability. Discussion of the findings of the study, comparison and integration of the relevant literature will be described later in this study.

It is possible that the findings of this study may have the potential to be used as a guide to assist other individuals with a similar experience. It is also possible that scholars may use the potential findings to develop educational program, curricula or interventions pertinent to
developing a greater awareness and understanding of religious and culturally diverse nursing students.

**Reliability and Validity**

In quality research, reliability and validity are established credibility, transferability, dependability and confirm-ability. These terms are used in qualitative studies to establish trustworthiness of the data. These steps are fluid and will be used to maintain scholarly rigor and trustworthiness of the proposed research findings (Salzmann-Erikson, 2013). Data collection and analysis will be completed through an established process to ensure auditability and reliability in the rigor of the study (Parse, 2001; Salzmann-Erikson, 2013).

The emergence of reoccurring themes in the data and subsequent analysis will enable an understanding of the lived experience. Strategies of “description, comparing and distinguishing, collecting and counting, presupposing and inferring” (Husserl, 1962, p. 93) will be used for data analysis in a reflective and intuitive way. Analysis looks for descriptive codes in the data with the aim of generating categories and themes. Each idea, code and theme will be carefully analyzed to identify the participant’s intentions and perception (Fu et al., 2008). These steps are fluid. Credibility, transferability, dependability and “confirmability” are qualitative data collection and analysis methods that will be used to maintain scholarly rigor and trustworthiness
of the proposed research findings (Salzmann-Erikson, 2013). Creswell (2009) defines credibility as demonstrating accuracy and validity of findings that are assured through documentation of the researcher’s actions, opinions and potential biases (Salzmann-Erikson, 2013). Transferability is described as research that contains sufficient information for readers to review findings that may be meaningful in other similar situations. Dependability is demonstrated by a research process that includes careful documentation in providing evidence of how conclusions were reached. Lastly, “confirmability” is explained as linking evidence between the researcher assertions and clear and credible data and methodological approach to the research (Creswell, 2009). These principles are used within qualitative research as a means to ensure soundness, rigor and value.

**Trustworthiness and Audit Trail**

Fu et al. (2008) and Porter’s (1998) description of the phases of analysis and methodology of analysis will contribute to the trustworthiness of the research and expands on Giorgi’s descriptive phenomenological thematic analysis which consists of four steps: familiarization with the data, identifying themes, clustering themes and constructing a summary table (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). Step 1 consists of reading the transcripts several times and listening to the interviews attentively to better familiarize the researcher with the text and to gain additional insight into potential emergent themes. Step 2 consists of meeting with qualitative
researchers who have reviewed the transcripts, in order to validate the researcher’s key codes regarding the research. Step 3 includes combining the coded quotations into NVivo (electronic file data base) and confirm the accuracy of the identified codes and quotations. Step 4 concludes with reading quotation files with experts in qualitative research and identifying major themes by putting key coded quotations together, reviewing the transcripts again and validating the essence of the themes, side by side with the interview data. The findings from this research were compared to the bracketed knowledge of this author to ensure that was free of personal bias and assumptions.

Methods and indicators used to audit and provide trustworthiness in qualitative research will be used with this research. Journaling (writing memos) and peer debriefing, (i.e. confirmation of research findings) with the members of this author’s dissertation committee were utilized to ensure trustworthiness (Salzmann-Erikson, 2013). The process of bracketing is a method used in phenomenological research. Through bracketing, the researcher utilized journaling and writing memos in order to put aside any notions, beliefs and personal experience related to this topic of inquiry. These journal and memo entries were logged separately from any data collection. Bracketing provided the researcher with the opportunity to deliberately set aside any beliefs and knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation and helped minimize the
researcher’s personal influence throughout the research process (Chan, Fung & Chien, 2013).

Bracketing in the research process is a method to establish validity within phenomenology. The author regularly debriefed with the chairperson and members of the dissertation committee to ensure trustworthiness.

**Ethical Considerations**

**Protection of Human Subjects**

It is the ethical obligation to protect the participants and to safeguard their identities as well as their shared experiences. This study poses no serious ethical issues and was conducted in accordance to Good Clinical Practice (GCP) (De Roy, 2004), the Declaration of Helsinki, (World Medical Association, 2013) and the Molloy College Institutional Review Board rules and regulations. Informed consent was obtained from the participants in this study for both the interviews and for audiotaping the interviews.

The informed consent document was used to explain the risks and benefits of study participation to the participant in simple terms before the participant is entered into the study. A participant may voluntarily discontinue participating in the study at any time. All research was conducted in accordance with the IRB procedures of Molloy College.

The researcher ensured informed consent from each participant and obtained the appropriate signatures and dates on the informed consent document prior to the interview.
(Appendix C). Each participant’s signed informed consent document will be kept in a secure location. Participants were provided with a copy of the informed consent form and were assigned a set of initials to conceal their identity. Participants were assured of total confidentiality. For the purpose of this dissertation all names will be further de-identified by assigning each participant a pseudonym. Even though there is no more risk to the study participant than is normally encountered in a general interview, if the researcher detected at any point that the interview is causing distress to the participant, this author would offer a referral to counseling or supportive services available to that participant.

The ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence and justice will be upheld (Leavy, 2011). Autonomy will be upheld by obtaining informed consent and voluntary participation. Beneficence will be upheld by ensuring that there will be no harm to the participants in this study and justice will be upheld by ensuring confidentiality and accurate transcriptions of the interviews.

Participants’ involvement in this study included a disclosure of potential risks and benefits of participating in this research study. The participants were informed of the benefits of this research by making them more aware of their lived experience as observant Jewish nursing students through opportunities to express how their personal experience has been impacting their
lives. The participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they had the option to end their participation in this study at any time. The identifiable risks to participate in this study were minimal. It is possible that by participating in this study and by discussing their lived experience emotional issues may emerge for the participant. The researcher would refer the participants to their school’s student health services for counseling or supportive assistance if it was necessary.

The author safeguarded the participants’ data, through to the completion of this dissertation. While coding data and working with the various computer programs, I purposefully saved files multiple times so data was not compromised. Furthermore, a default feature of NVivo is saving an open file every 15 minutes. Moreover, all aforementioned files were password protected. Access to de-identified data was limited to the chairperson and committee members of this dissertation study. Results will be presented in aggregate form to avoid identification of individual participants.

**Personal Beliefs**

Since the researcher is the primary tool in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2013), it is essential that I clearly express my personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of this study. Due to personal experiences as an observant Orthodox Jewish nursing student, I bring
certain biases to this study. However this study is an amalgamation of the experiences of other observant Orthodox Jewish nursing students. Understanding their experiences has been a driving force in my doctoral studies. Although I have made every effort through bracketing, journaling and debriefing regularly with my dissertation committee, it is possible that data collection and analysis may be shaped by my personal experiences. Therefore, rather than seeking to assure the research will be free of biases and personal beliefs, I am acknowledging this possibility (Parse, 2001). It is my hope that this research may enhance sensitivity and awareness and a deeper understanding of the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students.

This researcher used journaling throughout the research process in order to identify my personal frame of reference and “bracket” those beliefs during the interviews and throughout the research process. Reflective journaling and bracketing allows for the influence of the culture on the examination of the stated phenomenon (Parse, 2001). Furthermore this researcher regularly debriefed with the dissertation committee chair and members of the dissertation committee to discuss the ongoing research process.

For all the above reasons, I included my understanding of observant Jewish cultural and religious practices as part of the interview research process in order to understand what the participants described. As an observant Jewish nurse, I have insight into the religious and cultural
nuances and descriptions, thus there was minimal need for clarification from the participants. By permitting the “un-bracketing” of the cultural and religious facets of the data, the participants were able to speak freely and with fewer disruptions from the researcher. All other aspects of bracketing remained until the analysis of the findings was complete.

Qualitative research methods rely on the researcher as the tool to generate and analyze the data. Therefore, memos and journaling over the course of this research study allowed the potential of an independent auditor the ability to retrace the path of analysis. An audit trail would lead from the researchers thinking, to potential suppositions, and subsequent analysis of the research findings.

**Limitations**

Limitations of this study, as is usual with qualitative studies, are that the findings can only be generalized to study participants. Other limitations that may be of concern and may color the results of this study are sample size, alternative interpretations and the participants’ willingness to disclose their experiences.

Small sample size may make the findings inapplicable to the larger population of nursing students. However, the study may have value in that such a study might be a facilitating opportunity for other faith-based minority students and their teachers to reflect on their own
practice and experiences. Furthermore, an underrepresentation of observant Jewish nursing students in the United States impacted the number of participants available for this study. The method employed in this study is phenomenology, which does not focus on replicability or “generalizability” but rather on the lived experience.

It is expected that data, depending on perspective, and alternative interpretations of the data, can be understood in different ways in relationship to the literature. A method of qualitative practice, which the researcher utilized, is to actively record and analyze patterns of meaning through journaling. I was the tool of interpreting and analyzing the data while bracketing all preconceived notions. Alternatively, completely separating one’s self from personal experience as an observant Jewish nursing student is humanly impossible.

This researcher wrote memos and reflecting on the phenomena of interest, keeping these reflections separate and apart from the data coding and analysis and by utilizing the bracketing process. These techniques assisted in controlling for errors and biases. The limitations to this study design have been considered and efforts were put into place to reduce those limitations.

Jewish nursing students’ willingness to participate in this study was anticipated to be a challenge. As a member of this community, the trust needed to gain access to potential participants was forthcoming. The necessity of exploring their experiences, values and beliefs
within this cultural and religious minority was expressed as the intention of this study. The researcher conveyed explicitly that the interest of this study is how to better understand the experience of this group of students to possibly make educational experience more meaningful for all those who partake in their nursing education.

**Summary**

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study is to explore the lived experience of observant Jewish baccalaureate degree nursing students in the Northeastern region of the United States. After obtaining IRB approval, data collection using face-to-face semi-structured interview questions was conducted. The researcher completed the data analysis using Husserl’s (1913/1962) and Fu’s (2005) descriptive phenomenological methods, in order to focus on the synthesis of the experience of all the participants.

By exploring the observant Orthodox Jewish nursing students’ lived experience this research will reveal social and cultural factors that may have played a role in shaping their academic experience. This research has the potential to illuminate the connection between the academic experience of the observant Jewish nursing student and their personal religious and cultural values and beliefs, thus contributing to the advancement and amelioration of nursing science.
CHAPTER 4: Study Results and Analysis

**Introduction to Findings**

This study illustrates the lived experience of female observant Jewish nursing students enrolled as Junior or Senior nursing students in a Bachelor’s degree program in the Northeastern region of the United States. The nursing students in this study represented observant Jewish nursing students in that region, including New York and New Jersey. The data was analyzed utilizing the descriptive phenomenological methods of Fu (2005) and Husserl (1913/1962). This chapter reveals the experience of observant Jewish nursing students and the possible meaning in formation of the participants’ worldview. A description of the participants, data analysis and findings and essential themes will be discussed in this chapter.

**Study Sample**

The recruitment process began as soon as Institutional Review Board approval from Molloy College was obtained. Recruitment was achieved through the use of social media, personal connections with schools of nursing and interpersonal relationships within the Orthodox Jewish community. Recruitment of research participants was easily obtained. Prior to the interview, each participant completed a demographics form (Appendix D). Data collected included age, academic status, ethnic affiliation, marital status, number of children and level of
religious observances. This information provided further description of the participants, enriching the findings of their lived experiences. Interviews were conducted until data saturation occurred.

The study sample consists of eight female nursing students who had all self-identified as observant Jews. The criteria of being an observant Jew was observance of the Sabbath and holidays, adherence to the dietary laws of kashrut and observance of the principles of tzniut or modesty practices. Six of the participants were senior nursing students and two were junior nursing students at the time of the interview. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 39 years of age. Five participants were married; they covered their hair with either a scarf (tichel) or a wig (shaitel). No participants were divorced. All the participants at the time of the interview wore clothing that was modest or tzniut. (i.e. skirts that cover the knees and shirts or loose fitting blouses that cover the elbows and the neck). Five participants had no children and three participants had one or more children with one participant having six children.

A brief demographic of the participants is included and is shown in Table 4.1.
Three of the participants listed their primary home address in New Jersey (N =3); four were from New York City, Rockland County (N=4) and Long Island (N=1). One participant’s primary residence is Florida and her temporary residence New York City. She shared that she is
attending nursing school in New York City due to the flexibility in scheduling and the ability to negotiate Shabbat and holiday observance.

Data Collection

Prior to each interview I asked each participant if we could connect either via telephone or email to gather information in order to screen for inclusion criteria and asked the participant to select a time and place for our meeting. Telephone, email or text message confirmations of time and location were provided to each participant depending upon the participant’s personal communication preferences.

All interviews were face-to-face and took place in a location of each participant’s choosing. This was done in order to provide a natural setting to generate the most comfortable situation for the participant for a relaxed and optimal interview experience. At our meetings, this researcher provided each participant with the approval letter from Molloy College IRB (Appendix B) that described the study. This author secured written consent from all the informants (Appendix C) and made clear to each participant, the purpose and nature of the study and their respective role. This researcher further assured the participants that confidentiality would be maintained by sharing that each participant would be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and preserve their privacy. Participants were informed that collected information
would “not be shared with other participants or individuals outside of the project” (Creswell, 2013, p. 188). Furthermore, this author asked if participants wished to be contacted upon completion of this study and all wished to receive an email notification.

Most of the interviews took place in homes, coffee shops or conference space in a clinical setting. Although I had a prepared list of question probes and began each interview in the same manner using the open ended question “Tell me what it’s like being an observant Jewish nursing student,” I did not follow the probing questions in any set order. This was because the answers the interviewee provided continually informed our evolving conversation. The length of interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 2 hours and 15 minutes. The length of the interviews varied because some informants had a lot to say and others were very concise and to the point. If the interview lasted longer than an hour, I asked for permission from the participant to continue. All the participants were very willing to share their experiences. I expressed my genuine interest in each participant so they could “feel” my sincere care and true concern. At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked each participant for their invaluable contributions to this study.

All interviews were digitally recorded using two digital recorders, a primary and a backup recorder in case of technical difficulties. A fresh set of batteries were placed in each recorder and a sound check was conducted prior to the start of each interview to ensure optimal
recording. The locations selected provided a quiet, undisturbed environment to promote open
dialogue and allow for optimal audio recording. After each interview I transferred the digital file
to my personal computer using a secure system only available to this researcher. All the
interviews were transcribed verbatim after each interview and prior to conducting the next
interview. Immediately following each interview, observation memos and personal field notes
were recorded. I incorporated the observation data into the participant’s interview transcript as
part of that participant’s data. All the information about the participant could only be identified
through their pseudonym. I stored the digital information, hard copies of transcribed interviews,
and my journal and field notes in a locked file cabinet. All information related to this study
including transcripts, digital files and journals will be retained for at least three years.

**Field Notes**

Field notes incorporated descriptive and reflective data about each interview and were
recorded to the fullest extent possible in a notebook dedicated to the study. These notes were
utilized along with the transcripts during data analysis. Field notes were used to document non-
verbal behaviors exhibited during the interview process, to further describe the participant. It
also allowed an opportunity for this researcher to record and reflect on my personal assumptions
and biases related to this study. Recording one’s ideas, thoughts, and feelings during data
collection allows for reflection on the data and personal growth (Munhall, 2007).

All the participants expressed, in different ways, appreciation for having the opportunity
to participate and engage in nursing research. All the informants said they were grateful for
having had the opportunity to reflect and discuss things that they had never talked about. Some
comments that indicated this were:

“I never thought about all of this, thanks- this was pretty awesome,” “I feel like I
should pay you for a therapy session” and “This was cool- I hope I’m able to help
others in a similar situation,” and finally, “Talking to you was good for me, I was
able to think about things I rarely get a chance to think about.”

All the participants shared the sentiment of being glad to participate. The participants
were all forthcoming even when the conversations became intensely personal and they were
generous in sharing their experiences and their honest feelings.

**Description of the Participants**

Relying on Creswell’s (2009) claim that “description needs to be detailed so that the
reader is transported to a research site or can visualize the person” (p.269), I shall introduce each
observant Jewish nursing student by first describing her. This depiction is my direct observation
and some introduction of any salient information that punctuated our interview. The main
purpose of these descriptions is to provide insight and context to their lived experience. As previously noted, the names of the participants used are pseudonyms.

Millie

Millie, 23 years old and recently married, arrived to our meeting place straight from the clinical setting with a colorful scarf tied around her head, wearing a neat scrub top and pressed white skirt. As we began to talk, she shared her feelings about how being an Orthodox Jewish nursing student is the only way she has ever known, yet she felt different from other the students. She explained:

“It’s all I’ve ever known. I feel different, I don’t know. I just do. I just walk into the room, into the lecture hall and I just feel different. I don’t feel like one of them. It’s as simple as that. I just feel different. I just don’t - I don’t know how else to explain it.”

Millie had a lot to share and spoke of her spirituality and her connection with her faith. She seemed very comfortable sharing her thoughts and experiences. Millie described her life as a newly married woman whose husband is attending medical school. She explained how the delicate balance of school work, adjusting to married life, and preparing for the holidays or for the Sabbath gives her great joy, yet causes her some stress. She raised the issue, as did other participants of the shared responsibility of being a Jew and wanting to make a good impression.
“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. I think it’s more pressure; I really do because it’s harder.”

Millie spoke eloquently about her love of Judaism. She felt that her “Jewishness” was not a choice; it was part of who she is. She spoke with tenderness when she described her role as the oldest sibling to her several brothers and sisters. Millie expressed pride in explaining her role as an adviser and mentor to her siblings, providing them with guidance and moral support.

I was struck by the maturity and insight of this twenty-three year old who was balancing a new relationship, family obligations and nursing school, all with a cheerful disposition. Her smile was infectious and I felt myself smiling with her.

**Hannah**

Hannah is a quiet and timid young lady looking younger than her twenty-three years, wearing a modest blouse and a cardigan sweater. Dwelling with roommates in a boardinghouse, she was a single woman living independently for the first time. Hanna grew up sheltered in an insular Orthodox Jewish community and this was her first experience with people from other cultures and ethnicities.

“I grew up a little bit closed up, so I wanted to purposely open up. So, I was purposely opening myself up to see what's out there, so that’s kind of my mindset.”
Like why should I start judging people and saying oh this is the wrong way. If the whole meaning of life is that it's open, there are different types of people.”

As Hannah began to open up, her tone was firm and focused and her soft demeanor took a firmer tone. Hannah was clearly a person who was resolute in her beliefs and her determination to stay on course and complete her studies while maintaining her observant Jewish lifestyle. She shared her need to say afternoon prayers, something that was very important to her. This simple act would bring her unwanted attention and she felt sometimes compelled to hide.

“Like I need to Daven (pray) so I'll stand up and Daven, Yeah I do, but I hide behind a soda machine. I found like a little hole. And people do pass by, but it's not like out in the open. Because I don’t want to Daven in the hallway. I don’t want to be that girl. Like it's not something I advertise, it's this is who I am, but like... I don’t know. Like I need to Daven, so yes, I’m gonna Daven.”

When Hannah spoke about the importance of prayer in her life, by her commitment to practice her beliefs, she also spoke of the need to hide her Jewishness. I felt the pain in her voice as she described hiding behind a soda machine. I tried to stay present in the moment with her as she recalled her daily struggle to maintain her social standing with her peers at school while maintaining her religious practices. It was obvious that beneath Hannah’s quiet exterior was a fierce and determined woman.
Shami

Shami burst through the door, rushing and wondering aloud if she was late. Her joie de vivre and enthusiasm filled the room. Her energy was contagious as she sat across from me in a conference room. Single and twenty-four years old, she is a second degree nursing student with a Bachelor’s degree in psychology. Like other participants, she shared her perception of the novel experience immersed in a co-ed academic environment and how her outward differences reflected her inner differences.

“Gender-wise, yeah, separate. Yeah, like I’ve always gone to Jewish schools, so it’s just different, like there are a lot of different people there. It's different. A lot of people are asking me questions all the time, like we stand out a lot from people there. Their mentalities are different too, like the fellow students. They don't understand us exactly but we get through it and it's interesting, like the questions they ask and, yeah, it's a new experience for me.

I mean I'm used to being around religious Jewish people all the time and this is like a whole different experience, meeting different people, becoming friends with different people but they're just very different from us. Their mindset, everything is just different. Well, their values and just how they think of different issues going on in the world. Topics I can't discuss with them because we have different outlooks on things.”

Shami described her relationship with her classmates as friendly yet curious and said that, at times, she felt the need to explain her actions and she was concerned about embarrassing them.

Her sensitivity to her classmates while staying true to her personal religious beliefs clearly
caused her stress, as she continued to describe the challenges of balancing a fine line, her voice became quiet and her bubbly exuberance seemed to dissipate.

“It's hard for me to tell people. I know it doesn't sound like a big deal but I'm not used to this. I don't do this. Yeah. I'm just like explaining it. I feel like I'm embarrassing them. When I say something, you have to know how to say it because they could feel embarrassed. They might take it personally but it's not personal. It's just part of our religion.”

Shami spoke about knowing she was doing the right thing and how choosing nursing was the right choice. She expressed her personal growth of being more aware and more sensitive to others and that she hoped not to lose that sensitivity when she becomes a registered nurse. Her enthusiasm returned when she spoke about her love for Mitzvot and described her eagerness to “make a difference” and how when “she is able to fulfill a mitzvah, it feels right”. Her passion and enthusiasm to care for others were inspiring.

Rebecca

Rebecca and I sat at a dining room table, we sat across from one another, her pregnancy visible beneath her elegant sweater and long black skirt. She readily shared with me that this was her most comfortable skirt and that sometimes people would ask if the long black skirts were a
uniform in the Orthodox Jewish culture and she chuckled how in her condition comfort was paramount to fashion.

With an easy laugh, she shared with me the steep learning curve in maintaining balance of her many competing roles, her pride was obvious when she talked about her husband, a rabbinical student spending his days learning the Torah. Similarly to other participants, Rebecca spoke of her classmates and others, asking sometimes intensely personal questions, and how, with time, she has become more accustomed to the questions and she now feels the questions can go both ways.

“Even birth control. They ask us about the dating process and marriage and they want to know about kosher, what it means. They ask us about holidays, like what's Hanukkah? Things like that, whatever they heard of. They'll ask us. They'll ask anything. And I'm always afraid, I don't want to ask oh, what is this, but now that people ask me I'm like okay, I can ask you. I don't like to start asking, but if you are going to ask me about kosher, I'm okay so what's Hallal, tell me what that means.”

Rebecca spoke about an increased awareness and finding common bonds with other people from other cultures that she was unaware of before going to nursing school. Self-described as outgoing by nature, Rebecca explained how she feels more comfortable that she thought possible in having friends from other cultures or faiths. She explained how her faith and
religion are infused in every part of her life and how that can sometimes be viewed as extreme or
fanatical. Rebecca laughed as she recalled an experience of being called “a 1950s Nurse”
because of her white skirt and her pearl necklace and earrings. She became uneasy when talking
of comments about her changing her maiden name to her married name before getting a nursing
license or some of the negative comments by an instructor about her becoming pregnant in
nursing school.

“No, by that comment I was just really taken aback. It's my personal life. If I think I can
handle doing it then it's not your concern; if I'm not failing the class, then you shouldn't
be concerned.”

Rebecca was articulate and spoke hurriedly as if in a rush, taking the time to infuse small
jokes into our conversation. Upon our parting, this twenty-two year old, not so jokingly invited
me to her apartment for dinner, which I declined. Her generous nature was apparent in our
interview and was one of the reasons she wanted to become a nurse.

Debbie

Debbie and I met in her basement apartment on a blustery rainy afternoon. We sat
together in her kitchenette as her Shabbos cooking simmered on the stove. Her home is spotless
and as the delicious smells of cooking fill her kitchen, she begins to share with me her
experience as an observant Jewish nursing student. I listened attentively when she spoke about negotiating exam scheduling or make-up classwork because of religious observances. Debbie, in an informal tone, shared with me the variability of navigating these issues, depending on the teacher or professor in charge.

“So, I remember the first semester, our clinicals were on Thursdays, and Sukkos was — it must have been Thursday/Friday, or Wednesday/Thursday. I don’t remember exactly, but I had to miss our second and third clinicals, and I remember being new in the nursing school and being very nervous; but I went to the director, and he said I should bring in a Rabbi’s note explaining when I can’t come in and why, and so I did; and it was fine. They rescheduled. I did a makeup on the weekend, and it was really okay”.

Similar issues were discussed by other participants, the need to bring a Rabbi’s note or the cultural awareness or sensitivity of the teacher. They all spoke of the teacher making a difference in their experience in nursing school. Debbie spoke about the recurring issue of rescheduling and her need to explain and re-explain the situation.

“It’s a different director now. They were kind of ‘fishing’. I don’t know if they were curious or if they were trying to test me to make sure I wasn’t making something up, but it was strange. It was like, why would I make this up? I’m definitely not making this up.”

Debbie shared her reluctance to socialize with her classmates, having never experienced a non-Jewish gathering, she felt unprepared and unaware of the social norms and current nuances that form a social event. Her discomfort with joining in a secular social event was shared by all
the participants. As she described her uneasiness with acceptable social norms within the context of her Jewish observance, she told me the following, which depicted other OJNS experience with social cues.

“So, like being Shomer Negiah is a thing. You know, I remember we did our first clinical rotation, and there was a guy in our group, and he’s very formal, and he was doing handshakes. So I said, ‘I’m so sorry, but in my religion, I can’t touch a man.’ I’m actually comfortable enough around him to say, ‘I’m so sorry, but you need to stop doing that, because of my religion, I can’t touch men.’ And so he goes, ‘But you’re not touching me. I’m touching you.’ And I was like, ‘Well, that’s still not okay.’ So he kept doing it. And I said, ‘Really, you have to stop’, and then, he stopped.”

As Debbie continued, she spoke of the personal choices that she has made so that she can reach her goal and become a nurse. Debbie, twenty-three years old and married, shared with me her excitement to graduate and how she hopes all her past experiences will positively influence her future.

Elaine

Elaine and I met in a quiet coffee shop far away from traffic and noise. Wearing a pretty swing dress with a long sleeved tee-shirt and leggings under the dress, Elaine was both modest and fashionable with her long dangling earrings. She looked similar to all the other trendy and
fashionable young women in the area and it took a minute or two for us to recognize one another across the room. As soon as we sat down she began to share that she was the only Jew in her nursing program, and that being an observant Jewish nursing student was an “adventure.” She shared with me that she often becomes a “case study” in the classroom whenever culture or cultural awareness is discussed. She expressed with a sense of pride how she takes the time to explain the significance of her religious and cultural practices. Elaine explained that by educating others about the meaning of rites and rituals led her to question and learn more about the reasons behind customs that she took for granted.

“I’ve explained that hair is a part of the body that has no purpose. It purely represents vanity. For me, this is a way to tell myself that I am taking a step back from being materialistic. I try not to explain it in terms of religious practice, but more in terms of concepts that they can relate to. ”

I found myself in amazement at the insight and sensitivity of this twenty-two year old young married woman and her need to share the beauty of Judaism to promote understanding and cultural awareness.

Elaine grew up in an observant household and attended an all girls’ schools for grade school, high-school and seminary. She has never experienced being the only Jew in a class or in a workplace setting. Like other participants she spoke about her relationship with her Rabbi and
the importance of asking for guidance and advice in terms of “stepping over the boundaries” or asking clarification of issues with Halacha. Elaine spoke of the values her parents instilled in her soul as a youngster, visiting the sick and volunteering in the community. She spoke of her future in nursing in terms of doing Miztvot and Chesed and how nursing matches her values and beliefs as an observant Orthodox Jew.

Shoshana

Shoshana and I met in a busy coffee shop. She was dressed casually in sandals and a long skirt with festive jewelry and her hair loose around her shoulders. I was initially concerned because the music in the coffee shop seemed very loud and I hoped that this would not detract from my digital recording of the interview. When speaking about her Jewishness in the context of her academic experience, she became extremely animated.

“I didn’t know that my life revolved around Judaism as much as it indeed does until I stepped into a non-Jewish environment. It was all of a sudden like, whoa, I’m thinking about this right now. I would realize I can’t do that because I’m thinking about Kashrut or I don’t know if I should touch that patient right now because I don’t know if I need to. It was just so many things. You know, everything, because everything that goes on you think about how or if you are allowed to do it, are you not allowed to do it and I didn’t realize how much I thought about it until I stepped into a world that wasn’t accommodating to every little facet of it.”
Shoshana became quiet when she shared with me that all of her personal friends have been recently engaged or are getting married, and how as a single person she was lacking a social network. She looked visibly upset when she explained that she did not have many friends. She seemed so outgoing and gregarious and the juxtaposition of her personality with her perception of friendlessness seemed inconsistent. She shared with me her concerns of secular influences affecting her language and how her parents would be surprised to hear about her struggles.

When we switched topics and spoke about the patients and her interactions within the clinical setting, her demeanor changed. She described “looking out” for the Jewish patients and how she would check on them, even if they were not assigned to her. Her face radiated joy when she spoke about the trusting relationship and being able to understand the specific nuances that a Jewish patient may need.

“I just always check. I’m always hovering around those rooms like, is there anyone I know, do they need help with anything? Do they know where the Bikur Cholim room is? Because my initial reaction is, this is my space and let me just make sure they have what they need because, they’re, somehow, mine. That’s what we do. Do I know them? Can I play Jewish geography with them?”

Shoshana at twenty-three years old seemed to be in the midst of a journey of self-discovery as she shared with me her professional goals. Although proud to be a Jew, she felt reluctant to put on her resume the fact that she spoke Hebrew and Yiddish. Furthermore, she
spent time in Israel volunteering at a hospital and shared with me that she will not be including that in her resume. She felt that identification as an observant Jew would prevent her from finding employment. As much as she was looking forward to attending a job fair as a senior nursing student she wondered aloud if wearing a skirt might hinder any possible job opportunities. Her need to hide her Jewish identity made me feel sad and I felt myself holding my breath as she explained in great detail why she felt it was the “best thing” to hide her Jewishness. I wondered if other participants were thinking the same thing and were reluctant to share that with me.

Beth

Still dressed in uniform with her knee length white skirt and white scrub top, Beth was ready to talk and seemed filled with positive energy. As she held her lunchbox on her lap, Beth seemed relaxed and as she began to talk, her voice had a song-like quality to it. I found myself captivated not only by her words, but by her intonation and her story.

Unlike some of the other participants, Beth did not have the full support of her community. Her friends in the neighborhood would often ask her why she was bothering to work hard in school. They asked her if being a mother, shopping, and maintaining a household was not
enough? She spoke openly about the expectation of gender roles within the Orthodox Jewish community and how, although both she and her husband were traditional, that this was a joint decision and one that they both agreed upon. Beth, at thirty-six years old, seemed confident in her belief that she wanted to “give some energy back” and how being a nurse was the ultimate “tikun olam” (healing the world).

“Why not? Why not do Chesed? I mean, we need Orthodox nurses. We definitely do because who would you want taking care of your grandparents, your family members? This is the biggest Mitzvah. Yeah. I mean, any culture, I think, would love to have somebody who can understand tacitly what they know without saying anything. You know, nursing is really great. It’s the bedside. It’s being there with the patient and I’m happy I did it.”

Beth explained that she kept her home life and school life separate and, similar to other participants, she spoke about the complexities of navigating social relationships.

You know, I’m friendly with people, with girls, and I’m friendly also with everybody else. I’m not selective but I don’t get too close to anybody. It’s kind of like, I have my family and I have my life and then, I have school. So I don’t try to mix the two. You know? I feel like it could start getting tricky.

Throughout our conversation Beth’s frequent use of Thank G-d seemed to permeate all aspects of her life and our discussion. She seemed to pause in the conversation as if she was directly thanking G-d.
Beth shared with me how she had recently discovered her mother’s unfulfilled dream of becoming a nurse. Her mother had recently told her how she was lacking the support system and encouragement needed to become a nurse in Israel and although she had regrets, she spoke of the pride her mother has today in seeing her dreams fulfilled through her daughter. Beth seemed genuinely moved as she shared this story with me. “I only found out about it this past week!”

Beth said nursing seems like the right fit and she felt in her heart that she made the right choice, for all the right reasons.

Data Analysis

In phenomenological research, interviewing is a means to gather information and to develop a rich and deep understanding of the personal phenomenon (Husserl, 1913/1962). During the interview process, the sharing of personal experience by way of stories, vignettes and occurrences in conjunction with the interaction with the interviewee, allows for the interviewer to gain insight and get close to the actual lived experience of the participant. Through analysis, the text and data resulting from the semi-structured interviews provide a way for the researcher to capture the essence of the participants’ experiences. The themes are understood as structures of the experiences. Although the themes to be reported are framing the experience for all of the participants, the themes did not appear in the same sequences or in a fixed order.
Between April and July of 2015, I re-evaluated all the interviews by listening to each of them several times and by reading the transcripts numerous times until I felt that the transcripts mirrored the recorded interviews. Data reliability and validity were thus enhanced. I also imported all the transcribed data into the NVIVO software (Version 10.0, QSR International, Doncaster, Victoria). NVIVO is a qualitative computer software program used for data management. Using NVIVO 10, I was able to conduct my analysis and monitor the process of my data analysis through the features of indexing, memoing, and searching.

I finished analyzing all the participants’ data regarding their individual experiences of being observant Jewish nursing students, I began identifying similarities among data by comparing and contrasting the participants’ experiences until an intentional proposition surfaced. In this stage of data analysis, I found using NVIVO 10 was helpful in comparing and keeping the data organized.

The participants described their experiences as observant Jewish nursing students with statements and sentiments that corresponded to several categories or topics. Together with a qualitative methods expert and a member of my dissertation committee, the several categories and their meanings were condensed to seven essential themes. The themes reflected in Table 4.2 are the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Theme</th>
<th>Thematic Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing and Mitzvot, the Ultimate Chesed</td>
<td>An alignment of Nursing with Jewish values and beliefs of doing Mitzvot and Chesed. Making a difference and compassion and kindness is the way of life of an observant Jew and nursing captures those essences of being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Differences Reflecting Internal Values</td>
<td>Faith and religious values are infused in every aspect of life. Modest dress is the external difference that reflect inner differences and values. Feeling out of place and possible alienation leads to the constant need to explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concealing and Revealing:</td>
<td>Explaining and educating others, questioning what to share and how much to share and feeling conflicted with not always having the answers. Internal conflict and confusion leading to self-discovery. Curiosity and deeply personal questions can be difficult to respond to in a respectful yet delicate manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Immersion and Awareness of the Other</td>
<td>Questions regarding faith, customs or beliefs can be bidirectional and mutually rewarding such as learning about other religions or cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blurred Lines:</td>
<td>Uneasiness, unpreparedness or unawareness of the social norms and secular cultural cues while staying true to religious and cultural beliefs. Obeying the rules and feeling the need to be strong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Nurturance and the Teacher’s Role</td>
<td>The teacher making a difference in a favorable or an unfavorable way in their experience in nursing school, dependence on the cultural sensitivity and awareness of the professor or teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to Make a Good Impression:</td>
<td>The need to share the beauty of Judaism while constantly being the face of Jewry and wanting to make a good impression while recognizing the intense need to be understood and depict traditions in a positive light.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All existential themes have similar depth and all seven themes can be differentiated, but not separated because together they form the lived world or the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student. The themes from the results of the in-depth analysis of the data will be presented in the order noted in the prior section. The themes and the elements of the themes are listed, followed by transcript excerpts to illustrate the data (Fu, 2005).

Each theme is significant in explaining the meaning of the experience of the participants. In the following section I will discuss the study’s findings in the way I understand them, which came to light by reading and re-reading the data repeatedly and immersing in it, developing codes and reaching an understanding that connected themes to the data.

The thematic analysis section is organized by providing examples of the themes from the participants. This is followed by a discussion of the themes in relation to the data. Transcript excerpts have been selected as exemplars of each theme related to key thematic elements.
Theme I:

Nursing and Mitzvot the Ultimate Chesed

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

The elements included in this theme are nursing and mitzvot (commandment or charitable act) as the ultimate chesed (acts of loving kindness). The participants’ descriptions of why they wanted to study nursing and become Registered Nurses all included an account of reflection of incorporating mitzvot and chesed in their role as future nurses. Their descriptions of nursing included a sense of knowing that they would be fulfilling a goal of “tikun olam” (healing the world).

Beth talked about fulfilling the commandment of honoring parents and grandparents and described her commitment to meet this mitzvah through 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. Beth*

When describing their professional aspirations of nursing as a career choice, both Elaine and Rebecca succinctly shared the following:

*I like to define nursing in terms of chesed and mitzvot; that’s what it’s all about. Elaine*

*I know I will be able to help people and that’s the ultimate chesed. That’s what nursing is all about. Rebecca*
Shoshana shared her sentiments that nursing is in perfect juxtaposition with her Jewishness. Her ultimate goal of healing the world, one person at a time while staying true to her faith-based values, seemed a perfect fit for this profession.

*I want to do every day something that’s going to help my midos (character virtues) and my Yiddishkeit (Jewishness). That’s why I chose nursing. I think being able to be a nurse and do mitzvot and work on my midos makes me a thoughtful person. I’m constantly thinking about what others are feeling, needing and what I can do to make this world a better place. I like to think of little things that I can do for people to make them feel better. Our goals are to always do good deeds. That’s Mitzvot and that’s nursing.*

Shoshana

Finally, Shami explained nursing as a positive confluence to her lifestyle as an observant orthodox Jew.

*I feel like it’s something fulfilling and rewarding. I’m going to be working and fulfilling a mitzyah at the same time. Our way of life is helping others and keeping the mitzvoth 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.*

Shami

The above sentiments described by the participants illustrated an alignment of nursing with Jewish values and the belief in Mitzvot and Chesed as a Jewish way of life. The participants spoke about making a difference in nursing and in their religious lives. They discussed the compassion and kindness as being the way of life of an observant Jew. Chesed, the act of loving kindness is infused in all aspects of an observant Jew’s life.
The participants shared the experience of the alignment of their deep faith and beliefs in conjunction with nursing. They described how the essence of their Jewish faith and the wish to practice nursing encapsulated in perfect harmony. They all shared the belief the nursing was the perfect profession with endless possibilities to pursue a religious lifestyle in perfect harmony with doing acts of loving kindness while contributing to the health and wellness of their communities.

**Theme II:**

External Differences Reflecting Internal Values

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

In the following theme, external differences as a reflection of internal values, one commonality that this study revealed is that almost all the participants discussed their external differences in behaviors such as dietary restrictions or dress, reflected a deeper and more distinct difference within. The outer aspects of appearance through modest dress or the different dimensions of dietary restrictions and holiday observance may seem to be more obvious external differences of the observant Jewish nursing student. The participants shared the experience of the aforementioned external elements being reflective of a deep and more elaborate weave of fibers that comprise the fabric of their observant Jewish souls.
This theme of external differences reflecting internal values resonated in all the participants’ interviews. For example, Millie described her perception of feeling different from others recognizing the external differences of her modesty practices and her knowing the inner values that define the distinction.

*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.* Millie

Shoshana poignantly described herself as different from those around her. She shared that her growing awareness of her differences with her classmates and others are not limited to dress and food, but include social cues and expression of thoughts and ideals. Shoshana described the social norms or respect from her schooling experiences included standing up for a teacher when they enter the room. She found it confusing that her current university classmates did not express respect for their professors in a way she was accustomed to. An idea as simple as eating with schoolmates did not exist in her lexicon and due to her religious beliefs, sharing a meal is complicated.
I just know that I feel like I’m Jewish at all times. Even when there is a guest lecturer in school, no one stands up as a sign of respect, when they walk into the room. I think that’s strange. I have learned that there are different ways of showing respect. So I feel different in the way I express that social expression of respect. I also never realized how sharing food is a bonding rather than a dividing experience. I now recognize that our dietary laws keep us separate and different. I didn’t think my life revolved around Judaism as much as it does until I stepped into a non-Jewish environment. I didn’t realize how much I am Jewish in every aspect of my life because 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? Shoshana

Rebecca, shared a similar perspective as Shoshana in terms of religion being infused in every aspect of daily life. The religious aspect of faith as socially-learned behavior, is part of the participants’ internal as well as external manifestations of their faith. Here religious beliefs, rituals, and institutions are learned and passed down from one generation to the next, and religious norms are an integral part of the social structure and fabric of culture. Both described how more than the external or outward differences, the religious frame of reference is a greater influence in making her “feel differently.”

We have a little different life than everyone else. Religion extends in every aspect of our lives. They (other students) don’t understand that it’s not like you’re choosing not to do what they are doing, it’s that you just can’t. It may not seem like a big deal to turn on a light switch on Saturday- but for me that a very serious thing, I don’t know how much

114
they know about Shabbat and how different I feel from them. I don’t know if they understand how different I feel and how different I really am. Rebecca

Some of the views of external differences reflecting internal values held by the participants reflected a distinctness of a difference of values. They explained that the external differences of dressing differently or eating kosher only told part of the story. As Debbie described to me the complexity of feeling different, she expressed her need to thank G-d in every thought and conversation.

We are different, not just outside-in, but inside-out. I look different and to me it’s really obvious. Most people know I’m an observant Jew by looking at me and how I dress, so it’s not something I have to tell people, because they just know. It is a big part of who I am. It comes out in everything I do, every word that comes out of my mouth is meant to sanctify G-d, so when someone asks how I’m doing and I respond “Thank G-d” that identifies me as someone who is different. For instance, we are in the middle of working on a group project and I leave the group, because I have to pray. Yes, I am different and it’s not just my skirt. Debbie

During our interview Hannah shared with me her experience of feeling different. She seemed to articulate the sentiment that others shared about the external differences of dressing modestly and Shabbat observance as a deeper expression of faith and one that is aligned with the Torah and its religious values.

I constantly ask myself, how does the Torah and its values fit in? I’m seen as different and I think our dress is the biggest outward statement. I do stand out when wearing my skirt surrounded by pant wearing classmates. We aren’t doing what everyone else is doing, so automatically we stand out. I find myself wondering what do people think about
what I’m doing compared to what they are doing, those differences are who I am inside. Others see that we are a little bit different. Our way of dressing seems to be the biggest statement. We tend to stand out about that and the fact that it’s summer and we are wearing long skirts and long sleeves. But really our observance of Shabbat is more of a difference than anything. The fact that I turn off my phone, I’m not reachable and I’m not going to use my computer. It’s hard to explain and we are so different. Turning everything off and connecting with family and friends is hard for others to understand how we do this every single week. Hannah

Shami described the behavioral elements as descriptive of feeling different. She suggested parallels of social norms of intimacy and semantics not being in alignment with her religious values, thereby her expressive conduct is different from those of her classmates.

The way I dress, pants vs scrub skirts. Our dress is just the beginning. The concept of not having a physically intimate relationship before marriage, that’s just one example of something they cannot understand. They are just different from us. Our values are different, different issues going on in the world, we just have a different outlook on things. So yes, we do dress a little different but I also feel the way we speak is different too. I would not use a lot of the words (profanity) that they use in every day conversation. So that sets us apart too, you feel different in your long skirts and stockings but it’s also feeling different in the way we act and the way we conduct ourselves. Shami

Finally, Elaine’s realization that she was “different” had a profound effect on her as she discussed her personal journey and thinking. She discussed the strength of character needed to embrace and celebrate one’s differences and her pride in both the external and internal differences as compared with her academic peers.

We practice a faith of very old origins. A lot of today's society is focused on what's modern and what's new and what's progressive. We are incorporating our ancient
traditions in our modern lifestyles. That's something that makes us different; besides the practices not meshing with other people's perspective in the world, we have ancient customs and we value that. As opposed to the practicality of doing whatever it is we should do, it just wouldn't occur to most people. They don't even think about what their families did thousands of years ago because that doesn't make sense anymore. But this makes perfect sense to us. That sets me apart more than anything I can think of. Elaine

**Theme III:**

Concealing and Revealing: Obligations Responding to Cultural Curiosity

“Trying to demystify the myths”

The participants all shared the experience of being asked intensely personal questions about their faith and culture. They all felt an obligation to respond to the cultural curiosity as a way to educate others and perhaps reduce the stereotypes and myths others held about Jews and Judaism. The inquiries and curious questions span from topics such as Kosher and dietary restrictions to dating and intimate relationships.

The participants discussed the experience of interacting with people from different cultures and faiths in the academic and clinical settings. They shared the experience of creating their own dynamic interaction process, based on their underlying values, thus creating an opportunity to respond to cultural curiosity while clarifying misconceptions.
Shami found the unfamiliarity of answering questions a challenge.

_They ask me a lot of questions about why I do this. Like it’s also hard, they don’t understand. They don’t understand us exactly but we get through it and it’s interesting, like the questions they ask and, yeah, it’s a new experience for me. They ask about religion. They ask me a lot of questions, but they don’t really understand it. They can’t believe that we live life like this. They’re amazed. They can’t even understand. Like how we don’t do things (have sexual relations) before marriage. That’s like mindboggling to them._ Shami

Shoshana shared the similar experience of being asked interesting questions and found the fascination with Jewish customs and norms interesting, yet difficult to explain.

_I had to explain to somebody why I couldn’t get a coffee on Pesach. It’s not bread. Right, you’re right. 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 Sabbath stuff, about what I’m eating or why can’t I eat things. People ask me sexual questions and dating questions._ Shoshana

Although these questions may be deeply personal, the participants expressed knowing that the queries were prompted by cultural curiosity and not maliciousness. The insight of understanding the intentionality of the questions was one of curiousness and positive interest and made it easier to answer ostensibly intrusive questions.

_They ask a lot about how we date, because they all know we’re married, and we’re fairly young. I mean, not for Jews, but for the rest of the world, we’re fairly young. I’m 23 years old, and I’ve been married for almost three years, So they’re like, “Wait, you got married when? Did you meet him beforehand?” “Yes. No, we dated; just for a short amount of time. It wasn’t an arranged …” I get a lot, “So, wait, your marriage was_
arranged?” “No, but I understand why you would think that.” So a lot about dating, a lot about marriage and it’s really personal. I’m not sure I would ask someone that type of questions. Debbie

Debbie’s description matches Hannah, Millie and Rebecca’s positions regarding the perceived seemingly uninhibited and forward questions they are asked.

I have to say, sometimes it’s a bit much. They ask about Tzneius and they asked about the way we dress. They asked about food and they ask about intimate relationships and Shomer Negiah and I have found that some already know about the concept of family purity. They asked about everything. Hannah

Millie said:

The other students ask us a lot of questions about everything. Things they always wondered about and they don’t get the chance to ask; they definitely put us on the spot and asked all types of things. About Kosher because at lunchtime it comes up, “Oh, why can’t you eat this, that?” They ask about covering hair, about skirts and what else; about marriage-related things. They asked me about birth control and stuff. They’re definitely curious. Whatever comes to mind they are not afraid to ask. Millie

Rebecca shared:

I know people are curious. I’m not offended by it. I tell them how it is; People ask all kinds of things, even something really personal like birth control. They ask us about the dating process and marriage and they want to know about kosher, what it means. They ask us about holidays, like what’s Hanukkah? Whatever they want to know, they’ll ask us. They’ll ask anything. And I was always afraid, now I’m not afraid and now when people ask me I’m like okay, you can ask me and I can ask you. Rebecca

It almost seemed as if the participants felt compelled to accommodate the curiosity of their classmates and teachers. Both Rebecca and Debbie shared the sentiment of insensitivity into
private and personal matters such as wearing a wig. They both used questions as an opportunity to refute some of the biases.

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). Rebecca

Debbie described the experience as follows:

I was walking in the hallway, and I’d never met this person before. He asked me, “You’re Jewish, right?” I said “Yes” It’s very obvious. So he says, “So, can I ask you why you wear skirts?” So I gave him a two-minute Tzniut lesson right there. I haven’t seen him ever again, but they’re curious. I don’t think they’re malicious about it but they’re very curious. With my classmates, it’s mostly been little things, out of curiosity; like the wigs, like the Shabbos observance and other stuff. Debbie

The willingness to share and describe faith-based practices is sometimes difficult to explain. When explaining Jewish rituals and customs, Hannah found fulfillment and self-discovery in the process. She described her enjoyment in learning new elements about her faith while learning how to explain Judaic rituals to those who asked.

If they want to ask I’ll tell them. I was challenged to try to think of how to word it, to make a good impression without confusing or throwing them off. But I liked having to think about it, like to figure out for myself what to say or to just find out more. Some of our customs just sound silly when I try to explain them. It’s just something that I do, so it’s hard to explain. Hannah
The participants’ desire to help others understand customs of the observant Jews and to clarify preconceived notions and misconceptions was the driving force in the need to respond to cultural curiosity. Like most other participants, Debbie felt unprepared to respond to inquiries. She expressed finding fulfillment in the challenge of learning more about her faith and culture in order to teach others in a more meaningful manner.

*I often times think, how do I explain this to you? Because the reasons are much vaster and in-depth; ok, I have 12 years of Jewish education, and I’m understanding a lot of things, but am not really in a position to teach this. So that’s always the challenge and it’s fun trying to come up with explanations that people will understand. It’s a little bit complicated, and I don’t know why I never feel prepared. I should expect it by now. I don’t know what to tell you. But I always do come up with something.* Debbie

The participants discussed how the sincerity of the request is crucial to the conversations and in allowing for an understanding. They described the genuine interest of their classmates’ cultural curiosity in a positive manner. The participants all shared a strong sense of pride in the traditions of the Jewish faith with an ability to connect the education of classmates to the impact of cultural sensitivity in providing patient care. The participants described how the experience of explaining cultural and faith-based practices translates into the potential of cultural awareness and sensitivity to patient care in future nurses.

*People are just curious a lot of the time. I think they’re more curious than anything else. They’ll ask me, oh, why do Jewish men have those fringes sticking out of their pants?*
They just ask me different things about Shabbat, about holidays that are coming up. They may ask me “what’s that holiday?” “What’s that custom all about?” I’m very open about it because we have a beautiful tradition. If they want to understand, I’m more than happy to explain it to them just so that they can have an understanding when they’re caring for religious patients. Beth

Similarly, Rebecca and Hannah shared the sentiment of the importance of mutual understanding and the positive intentionality for both the giver and receiver of the information.

They shared that taking the time to teach others about their traditions and faith may contribute to a greater understanding and awareness of their future colleagues who may be observant Jews and perhaps by explaining their practices may contribute to greater cultural awareness of future observant Jewish co-workers.

It seems like it’s always coming from a good place. I think it helps that they understand us better. And maybe, they will take better care of a Jewish patient if they know. Rebecca

There are definitely things that people could think that’s crazy or why are you doing that. And there are negatives anyway associated with anything, like if you take it out of context or you focus on the negative and don’t understand why. So definitely presentation matters, I think, with how you ask and how you share the information. Hannah

Being a Jewish nursing student has definitely been an adventure considering that I believe I’m the only Jew in the nursing program that I’m in. Thank G-d I haven’t had any negative experiences. I kind of became the case study in the classroom. I appreciate sharing that my culture is different from other cultures. I appreciate it when people want to know so that they can be sensitive to others, especially their patients. Elaine

All the participants shared the hope that by explaining certain customs they have the potential to reduce pre-conceived notions of Jews. They spoke with pride about being the
“ambassadors” of the Jewish people and that it may have the potential to minimize prejudices and stereotyping.

This morning a group of us were talking, and some others shared that they want to go for an advanced practice degree and I said, I’m not so interested right now. I just want to start working and they were like, “Yeah, because you want to have kids, right?” No. They just assume that; if you are Orthodox Jewish you are going to have 10 kids. So now they know. Shoshana

In considering the aspects of religious practice, the participants utilized intercultural communication as a means to explore tolerance, understanding and valuing of diversity concerning different aspects of socially learned behavior or culture, including religion. Both Beth and Elaine shared the experience of expressing the significance of rituals and by maintaining an openness to share, allowed for further dialogue.

It’s interesting. There’s definitely a lot of interest from my classmates and others to know about Judaism, Orthodox Judaism. I’m pretty open about it so whenever they have questions, they’ll come to me and kind of ask me like, what is that? Is that normal? Why do you do that and things like that. Beth

For the people who are interested in how I live my life, I find myself explaining the significance of my practices more than the practices themselves. I don’t want them to think that I’m from this ancient culture that just does what we do, and we don’t think about what we do. I want to help them understand how to perceive the meaning of what we’re doing. Elaine

The responsibility to represent Jewry as well as the importance of providing accurate information is a sentiment many participants shared. Rebecca shared her experience of providing
an accurate description of the beauty of her faith-based traditions and the importance of explaining the Jewish woman’s role.

I might be their only contact with a Jewish person ever. I'm their first impression of one so I want to make sure that they get the right information because some of them already have some wrong information. It's good to explain to them and I want them to see different things about, let's say our dating process, how it's a good thing. I want them to see it in a positive light, not that we're like these backward people that we don't care about feelings and emotions and things like that. A lot of our customs and our Halacha are really interesting and they’re very different, as you know. I just want them to know that we think that everything's beautiful. I just want them to understand that aspect of it. With my friend, who is actually Muslim, we were talking about how women are looked at in their religion. I was saying women; Jewish women we're not second class citizens. And she was also saying that from her standpoint that they (Muslim women) are not either. We’re saying other people just think that oh, Jewish women, we’re just like nothing but I was explaining to her how we really value women in our religion and I want people to understand that, how they can do things and be respected. And we really understood each other on that level. Rebecca

The participants described that by discussing their faith and being open to the cultural curiosity of others and allowing for questions and conversations has led to deeper and more meaningful dialogue with those from other cultural backgrounds. The questions others ask led the students to a greater awareness of other cultures.

We got into a religious conversation that I never would have brought up. Like one girl was talking about her church experience and then they were asking about synagogue. It didn’t feel like I'm teaching her and she's teaching me. I didn’t realize how little I know about any of those things and it just fit. Hannah
Rebecca described her reluctance to discuss talking about her faith and how, with time and increased confidence, she feels more comfortable in the open dialogue with her classmates. Her recent discovery that other individuals from different cultures or faiths share commonalities has provided a firsthand learning opportunity of gaining better understanding of others.

“When I first went to college I always tried hiding being Jewish, wouldn’t talk about being Jewish. But people kept asking and were very curious. Now I get a lot of questions and I feel like maybe I should answer them. I feel like if they could ask me, I could ask them. So I got to learn about everyone else too. It’s pretty interesting because some people have things in common with us that I didn’t know about.” Rebecca

Similarly to other participants, Debbie described the learning and mutual respect earned from those asking questions about her Jewish faith and related customs.

“Everyone has their own religion and their own personal beliefs, their own rituals and things they can do, and things they cannot do; and I respect that. I’m learning a lot about so many different types of people.” Debbie

The participants expressed the perception of sharing information and answering questions, no matter how difficult, and as a way to bridge the knowledge gap and reduce pre-conceived, erroneous notions about Jews. The sentiment was universal that it was a moral obligation to represent Jewish culture in a favorable light as one way to dispel myths, stereotypes and biases. Providing explanations about complicated customs or rituals allowed participants to
learn more about their faith. When the participants discussed insights into traditions, they shared a sense of pride in themselves and their faith.

**Theme IV:**
Cultural Immersion and Awareness of the Other

*“It goes both ways”*

The cultural immersion of the students in an academic environment that is different from their isolated religious communities brought to light the profound awareness of other cultures and faiths. Orthodox Jews tend to reside in communities with other Orthodox Jews, thus lending itself to more homogenous communities (Comenetz, 2006). For the OJNS this homogeneity translates into a lack of exposure to other groups of people of different cultures and faiths.

The revelation amongst participants of learning about people from other cultures and gaining exposure to diverse groups were reflective in many of their statements. Participants expressed the sentiment that by becoming more aware and learning about other cultures, there is a recognition of cultural connections. Furthermore, the universal sentiment of understanding cultural differences has led them to an appreciation of cultural similarities.

*It's pretty interesting because some people have things in common with us 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 just goes both ways. Rebecca

Hannah expressed the same sentiment.

And then we got into a conversation...and it didn’t feel like I’m teaching her, she’s teaching me. Like 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. Hannah

Shoshana described the experience of finding similarities in different cultures.

There was a student this past summer and I was complaining one day about going in for clinical because it was Tisha B’Av, 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. They also have their own things going on or their cultures have similar ways to mine, but different expectations. It’s just interesting. Shoshana

Debbie shared a similar feeling and explained the purposeful exposure she sought in order to meet diverse students in nursing school. She described her experience of learning about other cultures as memorable and mostly positive.

I grew up a little bit closed in, so I wanted to purposely open myself up, to see what's out there, so that’s kind of my mindset. One of my closest nursing school friends is Muslim. We had a lot of clinical rotations together, and we studied a lot together. I have a Polish Catholic as one of my good friends, So, I do have friends like that in this program, who are not Jewish. That’s been a whole new experience for me. I feel like this is a good experience to just become more understanding and knowledgeable about other cultures and religions, because it’s good life experience and good work experience. I feel like it's
important to get along well with other people and understand their cultures and understand a little about their beliefs. Debbie

The fascination and appreciation of people from other cultures and faiths was expressed by Elaine.

Interestingly enough, a lot of my classmates are observant in other religions. They do understand the concept of praying. There's actually a 7-day Adventist in my class, which I thank G-d about every day because it's not just me. She does not come to classes on Saturday either. They do understand that this is a day for G-d. I never really knew an Adventist before and now I’m glad I do. Elaine

Participants expressed an appreciation of having the opportunity to learn and understand other students from different cultures. The data indicated how the interconnectedness of intercultural communication and a recognition of others internal values can create bi-directional learning opportunities of cultural and faith-based diversity. The participants shared the sentiment that recognizing others faith-based values was an important aspect in providing culturally sensitive nursing care as well as knowing what it was like to be on the other end of cultural misunderstandings.
Theme V:

Blurred Lines: Accepted Social Norms and Expected Social Graces

“A delicate balance of walking that fine line”

There can be lack of understanding of common behaviors and expected social graces for the observant Jewish nursing student, particularly when it comes to invitations to social events or physical contact with the opposite gender.

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. Millie

I mean, for us religious Orthodox nursing students, sometimes nursing can be overlapping with your faith and you try to navigate your way. I’m friendly with people, with girls, and I’m friendly also with everybody else. I’m not selective but I don’t get too close to anybody. I feel like that’s where it could start getting tricky. Beth

The participants explained the internal conflict and the challenge of finding balance between being friendly and collegial while staying true to an inner religious compass. Hannah described the challenge of maintaining her religious lifestyle while trying to socialize.

Like handshakes or high fives. And like I just didn’t want to insult them, so I just decided it’s like a handshake. But that’s something that you have to think about. So it’s knowing that delicate balance of walking that fine line. So I mean, in the beginning, everyone was very into socializing and making friends. But I’m not going to go to the non-kosher crab restaurant. I did feel like I don’t want to alienate myself, I don’t want to...I don’t want to come off like not friendly or snobby. Hannah

Shoshanna described her relationship with other students as generally positive and as she explained her struggle, she became animated while voicing her concerns.
I don’t know. It’s complicated. Friends will call and say, what are you doing now? You want to come to my gym, everyone is exercising, and you want to come to my exercise class with me? I was like, it’s at a co-ed gym and I don’t want to go. It’s harder because that’s what I’ve always chosen. I didn’t realize how different my life was. I often ask myself, am I supposed to be friends with them? Is there a barrier? They asked me to come hang out with them and that’s really nice of them. For example, they say, come hang out, go to the bar with us, which I don’t do. It was a really long winter so people kept saying, come to my apartment, we’ll study or come over, you know and I wasn’t sure how to go about that. I know it sounds simple, like go hang out, but it’s just not. Shoshana

Some participants referred to their inexperience of participating in a non-Jewish social event. They expressed concern about invitations to social events and not knowing what to expect or how to behave.

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. Debbie

Socializing becomes an issue sometimes. Let’s say for example on St. Patrick’s Day we had school. My friends 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. Rebecca

All the participants described various issues with “Shomer Negiah” (guarding one’s touch). This refers to the practice of refraining from physical contact with members of the opposite gender. Almost all the participants described the many facets in navigating physical
contact with the opposite gender as complex and causing some of the participants’ distress and feelings of being uncomfortable and compromised in social situations.

*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.* Shami

The observant Jewish nursing students found that students from other cultures knew very little about Jews and their religious practices. The participants found that other students did not know that observant Jewish women do not have any physical contact with men, other than family, including a “high-five” or hugging. Rebecca said she was unsure of what to do when facing this type of situation.

*Where there’s a (male) student that wants to give you a hug or a high five? I never know what to do.* Rebecca

A similar response was shared by Elaine.

“I think that people who are not members of the Orthodox Jewish community may not be able to understand that I would probably be very uncomfortable being casual friends with male classmates. That type of casual friendship makes me feel very uncomfortable. It just doesn’t occur to them that things like a male classmate tapping me on the shoulder or touching me in passing. It is not something that crosses their mind and I find myself in an uncomfortable situation and how do I explain it?” Elaine

Some participants felt unsure how to navigate the social norms of giving a “high-five” a handshake or a hug while observing the practice of Shomer Negiah. It is notable that the
participants spoke first of being sensitive to the other person’s needs, and only afterwards on their obligation to maintain these principles. The emphasis was placed on not hurting anyone’s feelings while trying to maintain refraining of touching of the opposite gender. Shoshana stated.

*My first semester. This guy was trying so hard to be sensitive. I don’t know what he thinks. He knows Jewish customs but he’s always like, well have a good day and he’ll touch my arm. I’ve told him not to, but certain people just do it anyway. I don’t think they really think about it.* Shoshana

Debbie said that in order to put a stop to the friendly touching of a male classmate, she needed to be extremely forward and direct. This was not her typical style but she felt compelled to be honest and explain that this was not socially acceptable as a sign of friendship to her.

*So, like being Shomer Negiah is a thing. I remember we did our first clinical rotation, and there was a guy in our group, and he’s very formal, and he was doing handshakes. I’m like, “I’m so sorry, but in my religion, I can’t touch a man.” And he was like, “Oh, no, no worries. Not a problem.” Like touching the other gender. He keeps touching me the next class and then the class after that. So then I say, I’m so sorry. I know this is just a sign of friendship, but you really can’t do that.” And I said, “Really, you have to stop.” And then it stopped.* Debbie

Elaine described the mortification and shock of her classmates at her seeming naïveté. She described her lack of experience with situations that may be common rites of passage to a secular or non-Orthodox woman, but for an observant Jewish woman, there is little to no exposure.
I had never had physical contact with a male until I got married. When we were learning male anatomy or whatever, I have had such limited experience. Let’s say, we were discussing how Orthodox Jewish nurses who are having new trouble implementing the use of a condom catheter, and people couldn’t understand that we have never experienced using condoms before. Because we aren’t exposed to this type of thing, some of the other students were like “what do you mean you’ve never seen a condom before?” It’s a culture difference that affects our knowledge about certain things and it comes across as a naïveté of sorts and I guess it kind of is. Elaine

Theme VI:
Supportive Nurturance and the Teacher’s Role

“I was so happy that there was someone who would do that for me”

The observant Jewish nursing students experience in nursing school depends a great deal on the teacher. Many students spoke of the challenges that arise related to their faith-based practices. The participants described the role of the teacher as either accommodating and helpful or unsupportive. Of the total number of the participants, seven of the students described favorable interactions while six of the students described unfavorable interactions with their teachers. Two of the participants shared only positive interactions and one participant described only negative interactions. Five of the participants experienced both positive and negative interactions with teachers. Despite the unsupportive experiences of the nursing students, the positive experiences had a greater impact and seemed to sustain the students over time.
The students described the encouragement and sensitivity of those teachers who were culturally sensitive as a positive influence. Millie described her surprise at the consideration and understanding of her teachers. She had learned from other Jewish friends to “brace yourself for the worst” and she was happy that her experience was a more positive one.

*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. Millie*

Similarly, Beth felt lucky to be fortunate to have teachers who accommodated her religious needs and heard that this was not always the norm for other observant Jewish nursing students. She found the teachers in the clinical setting and within the classroom to be helpful and encouraging.

*The teachers have been very accommodating. For clinicals, it was never a problem. They’ve all been accommodating. They’ve all been fine. I haven’t had any issues. From what I hear, I’m lucky. Beth*

Shami shared her experience of having an assigned clinical day as Friday and explained how her teacher was accommodating her religious needs.

*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. Shami*
Hannah observed that when she encountered a teacher who understood her religious observances, this equated to a pleasant and gratifying semester. I watched as Hannah’s eyes lit up as she described her teacher who allowed her to take a day off for a family holiday (Purim). Similarly to other participants, she found that the perception of cultural awareness and understanding of her teachers was varied and unpredictable.

*It really depends on your instructor. Sometimes certain instructors are more understanding, about being observant Jews. Some instructors make you feel like it's your issue so it's a problem. And some instructors are like "oh, of course, it's your holiday." I would have had to go in on Purim, but my instructor was very understanding and she's like "it's a holiday, it's a family day. Don't come in, just bring hamentashen." So it just depends whom you get.* Hannah

Teachers who accommodate the observance requirements of the observant Jewish nursing students merit the endless gratitude of their students. Participants used words such as amazing, kind, accommodating and helpful when describing the characteristics of the teachers. When Hannah described the aforementioned teacher who allowed her to take the day off for Purim, she explained how she brought cookies for the teacher and the entire clinical group and was thinking of some other way at the end of the semester to express her gratitude.

*We had a group project this semester. It was with the clinical instructor and I was truly impressed. Before we started, because there was myself and another Orthodox Jew, the instructor said to the group “just understand that they can't do anything from Friday night to Saturday night.”. I was impressed because I had never even heard anybody say*
that before, just so they can understand I don’t have as much time as they do to take care of this project. I thought that was nice. I was grateful beyond words. Shami

Rebecca shared a similar sentiment of being thankful to her teachers and nursing school for accommodating her religious needs.

I’m really appreciative of the time that they give us. It really makes a difference that we have the time we need to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Pesach. Rebecca

Debbie shared a similar experience of having a teacher who was accommodating to her religious observances and ensured that her scheduling needs for her clinical placement was adjusted and was sensitive regarding her modesty practices of covering her hair with a scarf.

I was so happy that there was someone who would do that for me and of course I was very relieved. Also when I went to get my photo ID taken, they looked at me, and they’re like, “Can you take off the hat?” And I said no, not really, no. So then they asked, “Oh, you’re orthodox, right?” And I answered, “Yes.” I just looked at my instructor and I’m not sure what looks were exchanged, but then they said, “Okay, you can keep the hat on.” I guess since it’s a religious thing, everyone especially the instructor, has been very understanding. That’s been really great. Really. She was super helpful. Debbie

Intervention by way of advocacy either by the student, a group of students or by a teacher or program director was occasionally warranted in order to meet the needs of the observant Jewish nursing students’ religious needs.

This school and faculty, especially the administration is super accommodating to Yom Tov (holiday). You literally just need to send them an email saying I have a religious observance day coming up on Monday through Wednesday and I won’t be there. They
say great, we’ll schedule a makeup for you at the end of the semester. It wasn’t an issue.

Shoshana

Similarly Debbie recounted her positive experience and shared that the director of nursing had been understanding and advocated for her needs. She explained how some of her observant friends in other universities were not as lucky.

I go to the director and she has always been very understanding, and, if need be they have whatever it is rescheduled, or let me leave early, or make up the work in some other way. They’ve been very, very, very understanding so far. I have friends (not in my school) who were told, basically, that they would have to repeat classes, or fail, if they couldn’t take a test, because they couldn’t make it for whatever religious reason; and that’s never happened to me.

Shoshana talked about her experience of having a culturally sensitive instructor as opposed to having instructors who “make you feel like they are out to get you.” These disparate encounters were confusing to Shoshana.

Some of my teachers are sensitive and some others have “stuck it” to me. For example, I didn’t get one female patient my entire second semester during clinicals. The teacher said some things like “she’s going to learn how to deal with men” and some of the instructors have encouraged me. I have an instructor who would be really sensitive and aware of my needs, like the one who would ask if I could help teach other students about Jewish customs and then you have the other ones and it feels like they are out to get you.

Shoshana
Elaine shared her experience as the only observant Jew in her class and she seemed to be fighting back the emotion as she explained how a teacher instructed her that she may risk failing a class if she “chooses” to miss class because of her religious observances.

*One of the professors was very clear that she felt that being an observant Jew was voluntary and that I was choosing to miss those lectures. She made it clear that I had to make up all the work and that I had a maximum limit of absences and she would be considering these as a part of that tally. My time off for holidays became a problem with passing the class, I made it and I do so hope that it follows through until I graduate.*

Elaine.

This situation was shared by other participants. Rebecca told me about her experience of consistently being assigned to a Friday clinical group, and even after conversations with the instructor that she would be unable to spend the entire shift in the clinical setting due to her Sabbath observance. Her frustration was obvious as she shared the circumstances of her assigned clinical scheduling.

*My Professor has been placing me in Friday clinicals for a few semesters. Why do we have to keep having this conversation? I told you this before. Especially if we've spoken to him about it and he knows. It’s kind of like why do you keep doing that? Why do you keep putting me in this position where I have to come to you and ask you and then you get annoyed at me asking you. I know it's really hard to find clinical placements for everyone so that's why I tell you in advance please don’t get mad at me.* Rebecca

Regrettably, Elaine did not seem to be as fortunate as Debbie, Shami and Rebecca. When discussing her modesty observances with her instructor she was stunned at the response of her
teacher. Rebecca assumed her conversation would go relatively smoothly due to the fact that there were Muslim girls in the class who needed accommodations for their hijab. What ensued was not what Elaine anticipated.

*When I told my teacher I was going to cover my hair for clinicals, she said, “Is it a Hijab?” I said, “No.” She said, “Okay. Then, I need a letter from your clergy.” When I asked why, she couldn’t explain it. I couldn’t actually find out if I was singled out. But it felt as if I was. As long as it’s not affecting my ability to practice within the school setting, and they’re not being overly hostile, I can manage. I just want to graduate. I keep telling myself, I just want to graduate, keep your head down and graduate. Elaine*

Religious accommodation was a factor in many of the participants’ choices when deciding on which university, and more specifically, which nursing school to attend.

*I did apply to a few different nursing programs and one school was about to say yes but they asked me if I can work at a clinical site one Saturday per month. I said no, that really wouldn’t work for me and I can’t. That school didn’t want to even talk about accommodating me, so I withdrew my application. So that was somewhere that I basically got in, but because I am a Sabbath observing Jew, I couldn’t go. And then there was another program I got accepted to, but because of clinicals on the holidays, I probably would have had to stay back another six months to make that up, they wouldn’t work with me. I knew somebody else who was in that nursing program and had to stay back, instead of a 12 month program, he had to do it in 18 months. All because he was an observant Jew and the school couldn’t or wouldn’t meet his needs. Hannah*

Debbie spoke passionately about not compromising on her religious values and the perception of the lack of flexibility regarding her inability to stay all day on Friday in the clinical setting. Additionally, there is reluctance to bring up any other concerns because she felt that she
was already being accommodated. Most of the participants felt the reluctance to complain about extraneous issues in nursing school but felt confident to request religious accommodation.

It was very stressful when they scheduled my clinical for Fridays, and I had to rearrange that. If there was any way for me not to, I wouldn’t have said anything; but there are certain values I will not sacrifice, and Shabbos is one of them. But, if there’s any way for me not to make trouble and not to make things difficult with the administration, that would be the ideal. I think that’s everyone’s ideal. But because I do talk to them about changing my schedule more often than a non-Jewish person, I avoid complaining about other issues. I won’t, just because I already make “so much trouble.” I try not to make more trouble. I don’t want them to get the impression that, oh, Jews are lazy and they have no respect for authority, because they always keep asking us to do things that aren’t the way we do them. Debbie

The participants explained the need for support not only from their classmates, but especially from their teachers. It was this need for support that made a big difference in their academic experience.

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

The need to obtain a note from clergy in order to secure time off for religious accommodations was met with a mixed response from the participants. Rebecca had no issue with obtaining a note from her clergy; she was more offended at the tone of the request.

My professor made us get a note from a Rabbi. We were made to feel as if they never heard of this before but I’m sure we weren’t the first people because there are lots of observant Jewish people that go through XXX nursing school. So this teacher said get me
a note from your Rabbi; prove to me that you really can't come. Like we're making it up in a way. It kind of gets me upset because I know that I'm the type of person who doesn’t miss school. So, no, I'm not trying to get out of something and I'm not trying to get like special privileges. I would rather be able to just come in and go to the class. I don’t want to have to go do that makeup clinical somewhere else. I'm not trying to get out of something. I know this will be more difficult for me but please, try to work with me and be understanding. Rebecca

Shami shared a similar response to the tone of the request of one of her instructors asking for a note from her Rabbi. Shami spoke with mixed emotions regarding these requests.

She needed us to get a note from a Rabbi that said we observed this holiday on such and such dates. It was quite annoying. Seriously, do I really need to bother my Rabbi about this? It was kind of annoying. I don't know why she made such a big deal about it. This professor acted like she never heard of it before, which really surprised me. It had to have happened before. I don't know what the big deal is about my religious observance. Shami

Debbie recounted a related experience of the request to bring in a note from a Rabbi. She questioned if this was due to a lack of trust or a commitment to academic policy.

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? I guess I understand the reasoning, because you need to start making rules and enforcing them at some point or another. Debbie

The teacher making a difference in a favorable or an unfavorable way in their experience in nursing school was the sentiment shared by all the participants. There was a clear relationship
to the cultural sensitivity and awareness of the professor and the academic experience of the observant Jewish nursing student. Although the encounters with supportive and nurturing teachers varied, all the participants were proud to be nursing students and spoke of the mutually respect and meaningful relationships they developed with their teachers.

**Theme VII:**

**Wanting to Make a Good Impression: Kiddush Hashem (Sanctify G-d)**

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

All the participants shared the feeling of wanting to make a good impression as Orthodox Jews. The participants’ revelations of their lived experience included the need to share the beauty of Judaism while constantly representing Jewry and wanting to make a good impression. The ideals of Kiddush Hashem can be defined as moral and ethical conduct and demonstrating to Jews and non-Jews alike the commitment to G-d and the Torah. The participants focused intensely on the need to demonstrate ethical conduct and depict traditions in a positive light, Shoshana expressively illustrated.

*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. Shoshana*
Hannah shared a similar sentiment surrounding this theme.

_I just don’t want to give a bad impression of Judaism. I have to figure out the right words to say. There are negatives in any case associated with anything, if you take it out of context or focus on the negative and don’t understand._ Hannah

Being the face of all of Jewry and in particular Orthodox Jews is explained as being a big responsibility. The participants spoke about being the first Orthodox Jew that their classmates may have spoken to and that they wanted to set a good example for all the other Jews they may see or meet. Debbie explained.

_You being a Jew, and the face of Jewry. Which is a little bit of pressure. My gosh! I feel like they all live around Jews, but they don’t really ever sit down and talk to an Orthodox Jew, you know? You live in Brooklyn. You live in Queens. You’re going to be at most within a five-minute walk of some kind of Jewish people. And so, they see a lot of things, and they hear a lot of things, which may or may not be true. But they get these impressions, so I just want them to not think badly of us, I guess I’m the face of Jews to them._ Debbie

Elaine shared a related thought.

_A lot of them (other 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._ Elaine

Shami shared a similar perspective and viewed the desire to make a good impression and her ability to make a Kiddush Hashem or sanctify G-d with concrete methods. The participants shared how being viewed in a positive light and demonstrating through their actions Kiddush Hashem was something they strived to do every day. Shami explained that through making
friends of different faiths and cultures and maintaining an approachable attitude, she has the
ability to make a Kiddush Hashem.

*They’re coming from different places in the country that may not have a Jewish
community, especially not Orthodox Jews. They don’t know about these things, they’ve
never seen this before. I’m probably for some of them the first Jew that they’ve met, the
first Orthodox Jew. It seems like they’ve never seen Orthodox Jews in the areas they’re
coming from. They don’t have any idea about Orthodox Jewish people so I want to make
a good impression. I do that by just being friendly with them and just showing them that
Jewish people are nice. That’s my Kiddush Hashem. I hope I’m making a good
impression to show that we’re not ignoring them because I always want to make a
Kiddush Hashem. Shami*

Debbie openly shared components of wanting to make a good impression as an Orthodox
Jew in order to dispel the myths and counteract the negativity or stereotyping surrounding Jews.

She felt that conversations explaining the meaning of Jewish customs was a means to share
matter-of-fact reality and dispel popular myths.

*I want people to value me as a human being, because everyone should be valued as a
human being. I’m talking about the concept of Kiddush Hashem. I want to set a good
example; but it’s not even so much that I want to set a good example so that people don’t
think about Jews in a certain way; which is definitely a thing. There’s a lot of negative
stuff out there about Jews and especially Orthodox Jews. Debbie*

Similarly, Elaine wished to dispel the misconceptions about Orthodox Jews from popular
media and television shows. She embraced this new experience of having personal relationships
with other students from different faiths. Elaine spoke sadly of the sentiment expressed by her
classmates of “you’re so normal” with the subliminal message that other Jews they may have
met may not have been as open or inclusive as she was. While other may have created a “chilul Hashem” or desecration of G-d’s name, Elaine described her experience as wanting to make a Kiddush Hashem by her sincerity and friendship towards others.

_I don’t want to come off as oh these weird people are doing weird things for no reason or like we are stuck in the past or we are just strange. It's a new experience. I grew up in Monsey. I went to Orthodox schools. It's definitely a totally new experience to be the only Jew. For most of my classmates, I'm the only Jew they ever met and the only familiarity they have with us is from “Grey's Anatomy” or TV. I am the only Orthodox Jewish person that they’ve ever really had a relationship with. Interestingly enough, even when I started community college, even there, when people have had other experiences with Orthodox Jews, they were like, “Wow. You're so normal.” I find it so sad that we're viewed that way. We tend to keep to ourselves. We don't explain things. We don’t talk to people who are outside of our culture and that just leads to this view of us as closed and closed-minded._

Elaine

The participants spoke of their need to be the representatives of Orthodox Jews, their statements characterized by a need to share the beauty of their culture and faith. Rebecca shared having the experience of being the first or only personal contact that her classmates may have had with a Jew. Her desire to share factual information is coupled with the intention of providing a positive and long-lasting frame of reference of what she describes as the beautiful Judaic faith and its customs.

_I might be their only contact with a Jewish person ever. I'm their first impression of one, so I want to make sure that they get the right information because some of them already have some wrong information about what kashrut means. Oh, I know what kashrut means. That's like kosher. That's when the Rabbi blesses it, right? I say no. It's good to explain. I want them to see it in a positive light. I want them to see like it's a very_
“normal” religion. We do take into account people’s feelings. We might be their first contact with an Orthodox Jewish person; I just want them to know that our culture, our religion, everything about it, is beautiful, just beautiful. I just want them to understand that aspect of it. Not just all the restrictions, the rules, but the beauty. Rebecca

Beth, explained that by actions setting a positive example and by sharing the nuances to her faith she has the ability to give others an inside glimpse into what she describes as a “beautiful way of being.”

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. Beth

The participants shared the experience of gaining respect and being mindful to recognize all cultures, ethnicities and faiths. Debbie shared her thoughts wanting to be viewed as a person, just like anyone else and yet she spoke of her obligation as an observant Jew to make a Kiddush Hashem. She explained this as an act of loving kindness. Debbie further expressed the sentiment that, by typing up her notes from class and sharing these notes with all the students via social media, she was sanctifying G-d’s name.

We’re people, just like you’re people; and we deserve the same recognition and respect that any race, any religion, any ethnicity deserves. I would never insult or make things difficult for an African American person. Similarly, you should never insult or make things difficult for a Jewish person, or a Muslim person, or a Christian person. That’s kind of universal, and I feel like the first step to making that happen is—to be as honest as
possible. If people have questions, I don’t want to pretend I’m something I’m not. I want
to be very honest and frank, because for the most part, I’m very normal–normal in terms
of student nurse. I go to class. I take notes. I go home. I study. If I type up notes that I
think are worth sharing, I’ll post in our group’s Facebook page so that everyone can
pass them around. I want people to get a good impression of me, and because I am
Jewish, because of my religion, I have a moral obligation to make a Kiddush Hashem.

Debbie

The moral obligation of representing Jews and more specifically Orthodox Jews in a
favorable manner was expressed by the participants. They valued setting a good example,
through actions or behavior and identified the desire for their faith-based traditions to be
understood. The shared sentiment of acting as a representative of Jewry and in particular
Orthodox Jews, was recognized by the participants and sanctifying G-d’s name at all times was
of great importance.

**Summary**

The participants candidly shared the aspects of their lived experience through their
interviews. The context of the observant Jewish nursing students’ experience is clearly dynamic,
individualized and complex. Understanding the complexity of the observant Jewish nursing
students experience provides a new basis of knowledge and awareness of this faith-based
minority group of nursing students.

The emergence of the thematic elements discussed in this section deepens the
understanding of the multi-faceted lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing students.

147
This chapter illustrates the experience of the observant Jewish nursing student and the meaning from the participants’ worldview. An overview and summary of the research findings, significance to nursing as well as recommendations for further research will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Summary

This chapter includes the discussion of the phenomenon of the lived experience of female observant Jewish nursing students studying in a baccalaureate degree nursing program in the Northeastern region of the United States. This chapter will present a summary of the findings, integrate findings with previous literature and discuss implications. The second part of the chapter contains limitations of the study, implication for nursing education, practice and research will be discussed as well as recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with personal reflections and a summary of the study.

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student (OJNS). An extensive review of the nursing, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and religious literature was completed. Of the existing literature to date, there is a paucity of research in nursing and education literature on studies designed for empirical study related to observant Jewish nurses and nursing students (Cohen, 2013; Haron & Azuri, 2015; Leininger & McFarland, 2002).

There are no studies that have been conducted on the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students in the United States. There has been a lack of general information about
this faith-based minority. This study will contribute to the evidence and research related to minority students and more specifically cultural and faith-based minority groups.

Jews have a long tradition of being identified as a religious, cultural or ethnic minority group (Dashefsky & Sheskin, 2013; Gittler, 1972; Kadushin & Tighe, 2008; Meer, 2013). Examination of the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student particularly as it relates to their academic experience is pertinent given the growing awareness of meeting the needs of cultural and faith-based minorities. The participants shared the experience of their culture and faith as a powerful and positive overall influence in their academic journey.

It is through a qualitative descriptive approach that this research was conducted to explore the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students. The purpose of this inquiry was to understand the observant Jewish nursing students’ experience in their educational classroom and clinical settings relative to their cultural norms.

A descriptive phenomenological method based on Husserl’s approach (Husserl, 1913/1962), was used to conduct this research. The work of Husserl has been extrapolated by others (Fu, 2005; Fu et al., 2008) to develop the phenomenological philosophy as a blueprint to analyze data. This researcher utilized the aforementioned methodology which includes four
phases: developing a bracket, gathering data, analyzing data and discussion of the findings (Fu et al. 2008). A descriptive phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study as there is limited information on this topic (Creswell, 2009). The analytic approach of Husserl (1913/1962) and Fu (2008) were employed to synthesize the data.

This research is based upon the experience of eight junior and senior baccalaureate students in the Northeastern region of the United States who had all self-identified as observant Jews. The criteria of being an observant Jew was observance of the Sabbath and holidays, adherence to the dietary laws of kashrut and observance of the principles of modesty (skirts that cover the knees and shirts or loose fitting blouses that cover the elbows and the neck). The participants were 20 to 39 years of age. In depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted and audio recorded, and the interviews were transcribed verbatim. NVIVO software was used for data management and analysis.

Seven themes synthesized from the data were: 1) Nursing and mitzvot (commandment or charitable act) the ultimate chesed (acts of loving kindness); 2) External differences reflecting inner values; 3) Concealing or revealing: obligations responding to cultural curiosity; 4) Cultural immersion and the awareness of the other; 5) Blurred lines: accepted social norms and expected social graces; 6) Supportive nurturance and the teachers role; 7) Wanting to make a good
impression *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctifying G-d’s name). The data collected was rich and detailed, shedding light on the experience of the observant Jewish nursing student.

Participants felt their faith and religious views contributed to the desire to become a nurse. They described combining *chesed* (acts of loving kindness and charity) with their professional aspirations. This study revealed that the outward, non-assimilated appearance of the observant Jewish nursing student, reflected their internal, faith-based morals and values.

The ability of the participants to educate and share their culture and faith with others was strong. The experiences of the participants highlighted their academic journey as one that not only provided an educational foundation for nursing practice, but one of personal growth and awareness of other cultures and faiths.

Demographics in the United States are changing and our population is increasingly diverse. To best care for diverse populations, the nursing community and academia need to closely examine the experiences of cultural and faith-based minorities. The data gathered from the in-depth interviews and subsequent analysis may be helpful to nurses, teachers, administrators and other health care professionals in understanding the lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students or other faith-based minority students or nurses. Cultural,
societal, political and educational forces have generated an increased emphasis on cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Currently, many students who enter the nursing profession come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This study may assist in contributing to evidence-based policies for nursing education program development. Despite improvements to the demographic composition of the nursing workforce in recent decades, the nursing workforce has remained predominantly homogeneous (AACN, 2013). The nursing workforce remains a predominantly a white-female concentrated profession (Kovner, Brewer, Fatehi & Katigbak, 2014) To better meet the current and future health needs of the public while providing culturally relevant care, the nursing workforce needs to increase its diversity (IOM, 2010). The demographic shift creates a social imperative that requires health care agencies to attract and retain nurses from diverse cultural groups.

**Links to Nursing Theory**

The shared experience of the participants that emerged from the data is the awareness of similarities of other cultures while appreciating the uniqueness of their own. This sentiment was best reflected by Rebecca who stated “I got to learn about everyone else too...it's pretty interesting because some people have things in common with us that I didn't know about”.
Rebecca’s statements reveal the underpinnings of Madeline Leininger’s theory of culture care diversity and universality, which recognizes the uniqueness of experiences in each culture as well as the universal experiences of culture. Also of note is Leininger’s theory of transcultural nursing which focuses on the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity. This research illuminates and identifies the observant Jewish nursing students’ cultural frame of reference and its influence on their lived experience. Exploring the experiences of this faith-based minority and gathering information about their experience may give nurse educators and others insight into their cultural norms.

Cultural awareness involves continuous examination of one’s biases about other cultures and exploration of one’s own cultural background. Campinha-Bacote’s A Biblically Based Model of Cultural Competence in Health care Delivery (2005) provides health care professionals with a process for becoming culturally sensitive and gain cultural awareness. Campinha-Bacote’s work includes five constructs: cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural encounters, cultural skill, and cultural desire. Cultural knowledge involves efforts to seek information on the worldviews of individuals from several cultures. Cultural encounter is the process of face-to-face meeting and interaction with individuals from diverse cultures; cultural encounters have the potential to refine or modify beliefs about cultural groups, reducing possible stereotyping.
Cultural skill involves collecting relevant cultural information and conducting research or providing services that are culturally specific. Cultural desire is having the motivation to learn about other cultures. Cultural desire is significant in the process of becoming culturally sensitive because without desire, individuals cannot be compelled to become culturally aware of cultural differences of others. Illuminating the experience of cultural and faith-based minority groups, can serve to promote the opportunity for students, educators and others to acknowledge and respect differences between beliefs, values, and health care practices of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Integrating Findings with Previous Literature**

As Leininger and McFarland (2002) reported, and as the state of the science literature review revealed, there is limited research in the area of observant Jews in nursing practice as well as nursing education. This study provides information that may increase the understanding and sensitivity of the nurse educator, students and nurses, to this particular cultural and faith-based minority group.

A review of the current literature was conducted and several studies support the findings in this study. Findings from this study supported those of McDermott-Levy (2011) and Doutrich (2001) where cultural nuances influenced interactions with teachers, registered nurses and other
students, thus impacting their academic experience. Participants in this study found that the immersion within an academic setting provided an opportunity to enlighten others regarding their faith and culture while requiring a renewed commitment towards their faith and customs.

For the participants in this study, Jewish practices, beliefs and faith-based rituals are at the core and essence of everything they do. Their faith and its related practices are not optional and are non-negotiable. This is similar to the findings from McDemott-Levy (2011) and Cohen (2013). Similar to the Arab-Muslim nursing students in McDermott-Levy’s study, the observant Jewish nursing students (OJNS) have significant religious needs that require accommodation. This study describes the experiences of the OJNS and will provide insight into this faith-based minority group of nursing students.

The OJNS found themselves in similar situations as subjects of the studies conducted by Meadus and Twomey (2011) and Love (2010). Similar to the students in Meadus and Twomey’s study, the participants experienced bias and intolerance related to their religious practices and beliefs. Some of the preconceived notions were based upon lack of knowledge and misinformation. The African American nursing students in Love’s study expressed their need to authenticate their cultural identities over the dominant norms, similar to the OJNS participants in
this study. Findings from this study support results conducted among minority nursing students and other minority groups and validate research discussed in earlier studies.

Furthermore, it is essential to engage the nurse educator in reflection that focuses on appreciating and valuing diversity, including faith-based minorities. Nurse educators have authority and influence to enhance the minority students’ clinical and classroom experience (Sedgwick, Oosterbroek, & Ponomar, 2014). This study may have the potential to engage educators and others to reflect on their area of practice and their experiences and interactions with cultural and faith-based minorities.

**Limitations**

As with any study, there are limitations related to this study and several limitations will be presented. Currently there is no state or national database that collects religious or faith-based demographic data for nurses or nursing students. As such, there was a dependence on this researcher to personally recruit participants for this study. Because of my familiarity with the participants’ cultural nuances and faith-based practices, bracketing my personal opinion was done to prevent bias. Prior to each interview, I compartmentalized my own experience and as the participants shared their experiences, I was engaged in their stories. Subsequently, as I read and
re-read the data, I was immersed in the present and was able to fulfill my role as a researcher by bracketing.

Creswell (2013) claims that “reliability and generalizability play a minor role in qualitative inquiry” (p. 195) Creswell (2009). As has been noted earlier in this work, transferability or generalizability, in the traditional sense, is not reflective of qualitative research (Husserl, 1913/1962). Creswell (2009) states that validity is one of the strengths of qualitative inquiry and suggests strategies to check the accuracy of findings.

Utilizing Creswell’s recommendations, I used rich descriptions to discuss findings. When describing the participants and their experience, the narrative has the potential to transport readers to the setting and contribute to the readability of the multifaceted dimension of their shared experiences. Furthermore, by acknowledging the bias I, as the researcher, bring to the study, it creates an open and honest narrative that resonates with readers. The information provided by the participants was considered the most accurate and reliable source about their own experience. A member of my dissertation committee, who is an expert qualitative researcher, read all the transcripts, descriptions of themes and categories and validated my findings.
Setting strict inclusion criteria assisted in recruitment of participants for this study, but may also have been a limitation to the research analysis and findings (Creswell, 2009). This research was conducted on female participants only, and perhaps observant Jewish male nursing students may have different experiences.

The geography of the participants’ schools of nursing may be another limitation of this study. All the participants attended a school in either New York or New Jersey and all lived in the Northeastern region of the United States. The OJNS may have a different experience in the Northeastern region of the United States compared to other geographic areas in the United States. Also, the majority of participants attended a public or private school of nursing as opposed to a faith-based university. There may be differences of experience based upon the mission and vision of the university.

Although this study does not report on diversity, participants reported their classmates and others to be diverse, suggesting diversity in the university and clinical setting. This may be due in part to the study site and the location in the Northeastern region of the United States, as a large percentage of observant Jews reside in this area of the United States. It is possible that the experience of observant Jewish nursing students in other regions of the United States may differ.
Implications of Findings

Exploring the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student while enrolled in a baccalaureate nursing program offers insight into the encounters and circumstances faced by this faith-based minority. This research has the potential to influence nursing education and practice and also affect diversity in nursing.

This study supports the need to explore the experiences of minority cultural and faith-based groups of teachers, students, and nurses. The issues that arise may have the potential to influence and inform education, practice and research. In order to understand and develop learning and teaching strategies that incorporate differences it is important to understand the experience of cultural and faith-based minorities. Nurses in areas of education, practice and research must work from the premise that cultural and ethnic differences are central to the learning, teaching and advancement of nursing.

Implications for Nursing Education

Given the findings of this research, there are several general recommendations which academia may consider implementing in order to further the development of cultural awareness and sensitivity towards OJNS. These include recognizing and responding to the cultural nuances
and religious beliefs of diverse nursing students and enhancing cultural awareness and sensitivity within nursing educational curricula.

Cultivating cultural awareness of teachers has the potential to create a culturally sensitive atmosphere in the school. Furthermore, when issues regarding culture or religious accommodations arise within an academic program, providing alternatives, university policies are needed to guide practice issues with scheduling, clinical setting placement or uniform accommodation.

Some of the participants in this study shared the experience of intolerance, in both the clinical and academic setting, from other students, nurses or their instructors. The difficulty of managing incidences of prejudice and intolerance in the classroom or clinical setting needs to be acknowledged and explored. This could serve a dual purpose of reducing discomfort of both students and teachers and help maintain a commitment to cultural diversity while being socially responsible. There is a need for research that examines the preparation of teachers, in particular those who teach students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Because cultural competence and sensitivity are central to nursing, universities and health care agencies could conduct multicultural education seminars for students and faculty. However, the nursing profession should not be the sole responsible agency for preparing nurses who are
culturally aware and sensitive. Living, studying, or practicing amidst a minority group affords nursing students and faculty the opportunity to meet and interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and to learn about other perspectives and beliefs.

This model is consistent with Campinha-Bacote’s (2011) concepts of cultural desire, cultural encounter and cultural knowledge. These concepts are essential in promoting cultural sensitivity and awareness. Multicultural education provides opportunities for individuals to interact and learn from and about other cultures. Cultural immersion encounters could also be achieved locally. Nursing faculty and students could visit or stay with segregated groups in the community, e.g., Mennonites, Muslims or Orthodox Jews. Such experiences would provide cultural understanding for both faculty and students to experience being a minority and sometimes misunderstood. This could be valuable for individuals to gain awareness of other cultures and to appreciate differences.

Faculty plays a critical role in creating and facilitating an environment of learning for their students. The OJNS in this study shared the experience of both accommodating and unsupportive faculty. Meeting the needs of diverse cultural and faith-based minorities is complex and multifaceted. The participants in this study described a favorable correlation of mutually respectful relationships between the culturally sensitive professors and themselves. They
discussed the positive influence of the culturally sensitive teacher as it related to their academic experience. The role of the professor can have a powerful impact and influence the academic experience of the student. Therefore, it is imperative to provide the skills and training to teachers regarding culturally congruent teaching strategies, cultural sensitivity and awareness. The responsibility of faculty cannot be underestimated and has the potential to be one of the great influencers in an academic experience.

**Implications for Nursing Practice**

Within the area of nursing practice there may be workforce educational initiatives that might be helpful related to cultural awareness and sensitivity. According to the Sullivan Commission Report: Missing Persons, Minorities in the Health Professions (2004) enhanced access to graduate education and support for educational and career development can be attractive mechanisms for increasing diversity in nursing.

The OJNS felt that there were opportunities in the clinical and academic setting to enhance the cultural awareness of orthodox Jewish practices and culture. The participants shared the experience of managing misconceptions and inaccurate descriptions about Jews and Jewish culture. Cultural issues may surface when nursing students’ transition to the workforce. A lack of understanding regarding modesty, work schedules related to Sabbath and holiday observances...
and other concerns may result. Health care agencies and universities could create an environment where students, faculty and health care professionals feel safe to create a cultural dialogue, challenging common wisdom, misconceptions and stereotyping of cultural, ethnic and faith-based minority groups. Faith, cultural beliefs and practices could be integrated into faculty and new employee orientation programs.

Integrating respect and awareness of cultural nuances may have the ability to impact recruitment and retention of minority groups within schools of nursing and subsequently in the nursing workforce. Cultural implications of work satisfaction can be highlighted through inconsistent and inattention to cultural nuances of care or a heightened awareness of cultural competence (Campinha-Bacote, 2011). Furthermore, the Sullivan Commission Report (2004) endorses legislators to place a high priority on programs that support educational initiatives for minority nurses. An awareness of cultural diversity within nursing programs may lead to recruitment and retention of minorities, thereby increasing diversity within the nursing profession.

With expanding cultural diversity in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009), it is essential to increase the diversity within the nursing profession to match the patients who are being cared for in our health care system (IOM, 2003 / 2010; Sullivan
Commission, 2004). By understanding the needs of this particular nursing student population we can potentially improve the recruitment and retention of this minority group.

The goal of transcultural nursing is to provide care that is congruent with cultural values, beliefs and practices which are culturally specific nursing care (Leininger, 1998). Additionally, in 2009, The Joint Commission for hospital accreditation listed the delivery of culturally competent care as one of the national Patient Safety Goals in the United States (2009). This substantiates the understood notion that in order to meet the needs of our growing diverse communities, we must have a nursing workforce that is reflective of expanding diverse populations. By enriching the diversity within nursing we can better meet the health care needs of cultural, ethnic and faith-based minorities.

**Implications for Nursing Research**

Qualitative studies and their findings are not generalizable. Nevertheless, given the dearth of research of Orthodox Jewish nursing students, these findings could serve as a foundation for other studies in the area of cultural and faith-based minority nursing students.

The participants in this study had one level of religiosity as Orthodox Jews. Although the participants in this study were Orthodox Jews, it nevertheless did not include Hassidic (Haredi) or Ultra-Orthodox Jews. The experience of the participants may or may not be similar to other
Jewish sects. Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, non-affiliated Jews may have different views with relationship to choosing nursing as a profession, and their academic experiences may differ from the participants in this study. It would be valuable to conduct a phenomenological study on the experience of Jewish nursing students elsewhere on the observance continuum. Religiosity and faith-based observance and its academic influence might be worthy to merit further scholarship in studying faith and the relationship of nursing students and their academic experience.

This study examined the experience of female observant Jewish nursing students. It would be expected that observant Jewish male nursing students may have different experiences. Male nursing students might have a very different experience from that of observant Jewish women. A phenomenological investigation of observant Jewish male nursing students in the United States could provide great insight into this minority nursing group.

The homogeneity of the participants of this particular faith-based minority was a concept that was not explored further. Only those willing to share their experiences participated in this study and this was further limited to OJNS in the Northeastern region of the United States. Research may be warranted to further understand and explore the experience of OJNS
throughout the United States. The experience of the OJNS in the Northeastern region of the United States may not be reflective of all other areas and regions.

Furthermore, it would be valuable to conduct research on the perception of educators, classmates and nurses in clinical practice who are observant Jews or who identify as another cultural minority. In order to fully understand the experience of an orthodox Jewish nurse, an ethnography of nursing as an Orthodox Jew would give insight into their immersion into nursing as a profession and the cloistered life of an Orthodox Jew. Additionally, examining this subject through a historical lens may provide great insight into the experience of Jewish women in the nursing profession and its continued evolution.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Nursing education research, including qualitative/quantitative and mixed method approach is warranted in studying faith-based minority nursing students given the limited research available. As such, it would be important to examine the experience of observant Jewish male nursing students and observant Jewish male nurses.

There should also be further consideration of national studies comparing other regions of the United States with this study. In doing so, there is the potential to study the international experience, investigating other faith-based minority nursing students, for example Muslim
nursing students studying in Israel. Findings from these types of studies could enhance and promote diverse nursing communities and provide a platform for funding diverse nursing students in educational programs locally as well as globally.

In addition, it would be important to consider possible data collection within schools of nursing and national nursing databases to accumulate faith-based data. In doing so, faith-based data could be incorporated into nursing education research. This also may help inform educators and policy makers in creating policies and programs to support faith-based minority nursing students and religious minorities in nursing practice. It is possible that the findings of this study may have the potential to be used as a guide to assist other individuals with a similar experience. It is also possible that scholars may use the potential findings to develop educational program, curricula or interventions pertinent to developing a greater awareness and understanding of religious and culturally diverse nursing students.

**Personal Reflections / Serendipity**

While pondering my own experiences, I was surprised to learn about the participants’ rationale to study nursing, and how their choice of nursing as a profession was different from my personal experience. Unlike myself, the participants’ motivation to study nursing and become registered nurses were more altruistic and of a spiritual nature than my personal reasons to
become a nurse. Participants of this study illustrate sincerity, perseverance and the influence of teachers on students’ experience.

The common myth is that nursing is not an accepted profession among Jews. I did not find this to be the case. Contrary to popular belief, I found nursing as a profession more accepted than generally believed. Many of the participants shared how proud their families were that they were on the journey to become registered nurses. With the exception of one participant, whose community was not supportive and questioned her need to become a nurse, the majority of the participants shared a sense of pride of their families, friends and communities.

I had not fully appreciated how much culture and faith impacted the everyday lives and the learning environment of the participants. Participants expressed an appreciation of having the opportunity to understand other students from different cultures. They shared the sentiment that recognizing others faith-based values was an important aspect in providing culturally sensitive nursing care as well as knowing what it was like to be on the other end of cultural misunderstandings. I was astounded by the openness and vulnerability of the participants and this humbled me. I am grateful I chose this work, or that it chose me.
This study validated my commitment to seek ways to contribute to the enrichment of the minority nursing students’ experience as well as contributing to the evidence validating the need to increase diversity in nursing and nursing faculty. As I reflect on all these thoughts, I admire the participants for sharing their experiences with me and for their tenacity in meeting the challenges and embracing the possibilities nursing has to offer. The nursing profession will be enriched, owing to these participants, who are soon to be new nurses, adding diversity, depth and determination to meet the current and complex needs of health care.

Conclusion

No one seems to question how difficult nursing school is, giving the complexity of health care in the 21st century. It is assumed that becoming a registered nurse is not simple and is expected to be filled with hard work. What is not so readily acknowledged is the influence of culture or faith and the erroneous perception that the experiences are similar for all nursing students, regardless of background.

Findings from this study demonstrate the uniqueness of this faith-based minority nursing student group enrolled in a baccalaureate degree nursing program. Participants were all current students in this type of program in the Northeastern region of the United States. What shines through is the effect of faith and culture in every aspect of their experience. Faith and culture
influenced experiences of the participants and bridging culture and a greater self-awareness was an important theme. Participants learned to navigate differences in culture and faith, in the process learning about themselves and how they can positively impact the nursing profession. It was clearly evident that support from teachers and others was integral to participants’ experience and to their success.

These findings may be used to influence educational program development for Orthodox Jewish nursing students and other religious minority groups. Findings from this study might inform curricula design and interventions pertinent to developing greater awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of religious and culturally diverse nursing students in order to maximize the recruitment and retention of diverse ethnic minorities in nursing education.

This chapter linked theory, and connected findings with current literature. The value of evidence from previous research strengthens the significance and scholarship of this study. Differences in culture or faith may offer an opportunity to explore and celebrate diversity. This chapter offers suggestions to nurse educators, academic communities and nurses in improving culturally sensitive nursing education and program development. Findings from this study may generate thought for future research to gain a greater understanding of OJNS or other cultural or faith-based minority populations.
Glossary of Terms

Chalav Yisroel: ‘Milk for the Jews’ is manufactured or under Jewish supervision (Igros Mohe Yoreh 1:47)

Chanukah: Festival of Lights

Chesed: Act of loving kindness and charity

Chinuch: Education

Diaspora: The existence of Jews on foreign soil of an exiled community considered to be transitory (Rambam Introduction)

Eishet Chayil: Literally defined as Woman of Valor (Book of Proverbs). It is customary for husbands to recite this poem to their wives on the Sabbath, to think about and be thankful for all his wife has done for him and their family throughout the past week.

Ervah: Any body part of a person that is customarily covered (Shulchan Aruch: Chapter 75)

Halacha: Practical application of Jewish law

Hashem: G-d

Hassidic or Haredi: Literally defined as piety; an insular branch of Orthodox Jews founded in the 18th century by the Baal Shem-Tov. Hassidism is characterized by its emphasis on prayer, strict adherence to rituals, joy and religious passion

Hechsher: Kosher certifications that may be printed on the food or product package
Kashruth: Dietary laws of kosher fitness of all food for those who observe Jewish dietary laws

Kiddush Hashem: sanctifying G-d’s name

Meyaledet: Midwife; ‘Helper in birth’

Midrash: Oral teachings of the Torah; connects the verse to the law as opposed to the Talmud which starts with the understanding of the law and connects it to the verse (Rambam Introduction)

Mitzvah / Mitzvot: Literally translated as commandment, is used in the context of “a good deed” or any charitable act

Rabbi or Rov: Jewish scholar, advisor or teacher of Jewish studies or Jewish law or one who is appointed as a Jewish thought leader and spiritual teacher

Rashi: (Rabbi Shlomo Ben Isaac of Troyes, France 1040-1105)

Shabbos or Sabbath: Day of rest beginning Friday at sunset and ending at sundown Saturday

Schulchan Aruch or Kitzur Schulchan Aruch: Code of Jewish Law (Rabbi Yosef Karo, 1565, Tzefat; Israel)

Sheitel: Wig

Shomer Negiah: The concept in Jewish law restricting physical contact with a member of the opposite gender except for a first degree relative. Literally translated as observing touch (Leviticus, 18:6 and 18:19)

Synagogue: (Shul): Jewish house of worship or Jewish house of prayer
Tanach: An acronym for the Books of Scriptures

Talmud: Rabbinical compilation of thousands of Rabbis on a variety of subjects, including Halacha (law), ethics, philosophy, customs, history and parables (500 CE, Babylon) Rambam
Introduction

Torah: Old Testament; the entire books of Jewish teachings and law and books of Jewish scriptures. (Rambam Introduction)

Tzneius or Tzniut: Modesty in dress and moral conduct and behavior with a correlation to the concept of humility, can be used equally for male and female
REFERENCES


doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2013.12.0


Coleman-Brueckheimer, K., Spitzer, J., & Koffman, J. (2009). Involvement of rabbinic and communal authorities in decision-making by haredi Jews in the UK with breast cancer:
An interpretative phenomenological analysis. Social Science & Medicine, 68(2), 323-333. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2008.10.003


doi:10.1007/978-01-007-5204-7_1.


doi:10.1177/1043659604268966

Kadushin, C., & Tighe, E. (2008). How hard is it to be a Jew on college campuses?

*Contemporary Jewry, 28*(1), 1-20. Retrieved from


doi:10.1097/01.NAJ.0000443767.20011.7f [doi]


Maimonides, M., (n.d) Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Daot 6:1


doi:http://dx.doi.org.molloy.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s12115-002-1019-z


Saucier Wodinsky, S. (2009). The impact of personality, gender role identity, family role identity, and religious background on the occupational choice of orthodox and non-orthodox Jewish women (Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration, College of Business Administration TUI University). ProQuest, 1-238. doi:3383700


Talmud; Mesechtas Makos 22a, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 276:9., ND


doi:10.1207/s15327582ijpr1602_3


Appendix A: Invitation to participate in the study

On Molloy College Stationery

Dear __________,

My name is Toby Bressler and I am a PhD student in Nursing. I am studying what it is like for women to be an observant Jewish nursing student in academia.

I received your name from __________, a colleague or friend of yours. I would like to invite you to be a participant in a research study about the experience of being an observant Jewish nursing student.

I am interested in what this experience is or has been like for you. I would like to speak with you about your experiences.

Your total time commitment would be approximately two hours. Your participation would require an initial in person interview in a quiet venue of your choice which would take approximately 1-2 hours.

Your participation would be completely voluntary and, should you so choose, you would be able to withdraw from the study at any time. I would like to interview people in the next few months and would arrange to meet you wherever it would be most convenient for you. I am enclosing my e-mail address and telephone number. If you would like to participate you may contact me any way you prefer.

I would be grateful for your time and the opportunity to listen to you and learn about your experience.

Thank you in advance.

Toby Bressler, PhD(c), RN, MPA, OCN
RNToby@gmail.com
Date: March 5, 2015
To: Toby Bressler
From: Kathleen Maurer Smith, PhD
Co-Chair, Molloy College Institutional Review Board
Veronica D. Feeg, PhD, RN, FAAN
Co-Chair, Molloy College Institutional Review Board

SUBJECT: MOLLOY IRB REVIEW AND DETERMINATION OF EXPEDITED STATUS

Study Title: The lived experience of observant Jewish nursing students: A phenomenological study
Approved: March 5, 2015

Dear Ms. Bressler:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Molloy College has reviewed the above-mentioned research proposal and determined that this proposal is approved by the committee for the Molloy subjects and pending approval for any other schools that you may use. It is considered an EXPEDITED review per the requirements of Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human subjects as defined in 45CFR46.101(b) and has met the conditions for conducting the research. Note that as Principal Investigator, please send us evidence of completing the CITI certification required for your study.

You may proceed with your research. Please submit a report to the committee at the conclusion of your project.

Changes to the Research: It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to inform the Molloy College IRB of any changes to this research. A change in the research may change the project from EXPEDITED status that would require communication with the IRB.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Maurer Smith, PhD

Veronica D. Feeg, PhD, RN, FAAN
Appendix C: Informed Consent

Consent Form for Participation in an Interventional Research Study
Molloy College
The Lived Experience of Observant Jewish Nursing Students
Toby Bressler, RN, MPA, OCN
Doctoral Candidate

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Toby Bressler. The purpose of this research is to investigate the lived experience of the observant Jewish nursing student within the Northeastern region of the United States. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a female observant Jewish nursing student and will be asked to participate in an interview. During the interview, you will be asked questions to describe what it’s like to be an observant Jewish nursing student. This interview will be audio taped and transcribed and might last one to two hours.

There are minimal known risks associated with this research study. This research may contribute to a better understanding about what it’s like being an observant Jewish nursing student. No personal identifiers will be linked to the data and your name will not appear in any transcripts. There will be no identification of your university or your name in the publication resulting from this study. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or withdraw from this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Rose Schecter 516-323-3000. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board at Molloy College.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant’s Name ___________________ Signature ___________________ Date __

Researcher’s Name ___________________ Signature ___________________ Date __

A copy of this consent form will be given to you.
Appendix D: Demographic Questions

This questionnaire is designed to gather information about you. Your replies are confidential and will be compiled without any individual identifiers.

Please provide your answer in the blank lines

Name: ______________________________________ Age: _________
Address ______________________________________
Phone Number ______________________________
Email Address ______________________________

What is your current classification in college based on years of attendance?
    a. Sophomore ______
    b. Junior _____
    c. Senior _____

Please identify your religious ethnic affiliation

    ____Ashkenazic    ____Chassidish    ____Sephardic    ____Other

Do you consider yourself to be Sabbath (Shabbos) observant? ___yes    ____no
Do you consider yourself to observe Kashrut? ___yes    ____no
Do you consider yourself to maintain modesty practices (Tzniut)? ___yes    ____no

Are you married? ___yes    ____no

Do you have children? ______ If yes, please list the ages of your children__________________

Whom do you live with? ____________________________

Please share anything else you wish to add ________________________________

197