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Pilot Test Report

The Transformative Changes in Female Students

At the Charedi (ultra-orthodox) College in Jerusalem

Completed as partial assignment for

EDA 7940-009

Internship I

For Dr. Valerie C. Bryan

Spring 2012

April 26, 2012

**Purpose of Study**

This study is an overview of practices in an organization serving an economically disadvantaged and socially isolated population in the Israeli society. It aims to evaluate the role and impact that academic education holds in bringing forth an urgently needed social and economic change within the Charedi (ultra-orthodox) religious group; while improving the cross culture communication between this community and the rest of the Israeli society.

This qualitative study focuses on the Charedi (ultra-orthodox) community’s efforts in expanding their ability in helping themselves towards academic and economic development, and thus contributes to the Israeli society.

This study will explore the unique environment of the Charedi (ultra-orthodox) College in Jerusalem; focus on the female students’ perception of their Higher Education experience; evaluate the transformative changes that they may have, and the effect it holds in their personal and social arenas.

**Research Question**

This study aims to explore the unique academic environment of the Charedi (ultra-orthodox) College of Jerusalem [Hebrew: Michlala Charedit Yerushalayim - MCY], and the personal and social influence it holds on its female students.

It aims to answer the following:

* What is the perception of the female students’ of their higher education experience at the Charedi College of Jerusalem;
* What are the transformative changes that they may have, and the effect it holds in their personal and social arenas.

**Internship I - Assignment Plan**

1. For this internship assignment, an interview instrument will be developed, and a pilot testing of this instrument will be conducted.
2. The instrument includes 15-20 questions that pertain to the female students’ experiences.
3. This qualitative study instrument requires personal interviews.
4. A purposive sample of three MCY students will be selected to participate.
5. They must have the following criteria:
   * Participants are currently enrolled in the MCY.
   * Participants are female students of ultra-orthodox or middle-orthodox background.
   * Participants are of 18-28 years old.
6. In order to find and select the participants, the researcher will request the assistance of the academic advisor at the MCY, Mrs. Tzippi Glick. She will provide names of students who will be willing to participate in the study.
7. A phone conversation with the participants prior to the interview will take place. The students will be informed of the purpose of the study and the scope of the interview. The Interview Protocol will be read by the participants prior to the interview for their consent.
8. The students’ information will include demographic data: name, age, field of study, religious, educational, professional background etc.
9. The testing interview will be conducted in a place convenient to the participants, preferably at the MCY campus during school hours.
10. The findings will be evaluated, studied, and the instruments will be modified accordingly.

**Pilot Test**

This pilot test is a preliminary test of data collection instrument, aimed to identify and eliminate problems, and make corrective changes or adjustments before actually collecting data from the target population. This Pilot testing provided an opportunity to detect and correct several potential problems with the instrument.

**Pilot Test Results**

***The Researcher:*** The researcher is an FAU COE graduate student, who is of modern-orthodox background, which holds more lenient religious practices and regular exposure to the non-religious open society and lifestyle. She shares similar values and beliefs, although not to the same level of religious observance, and therefore is likely to hold some bias. The researcher holds the assumption that there may be differences in the perceptions among the participants, due to the difference of their marital status, and religious backgrounds.

***The Sample (Participants):*** There are three female participants in this pilot test.

* Participants are of 18-25 age groups.
* Participants are of different professional background and work experiences.
* Participants are all full time students at MCY.
* Participant # 1 is a 25 year old married woman, mother of 2, and religious from birth.
* Participant # 2 is a 22 year old unmarried woman, a Ba’al Teshuva (first generation - newly religious), who served in the Israeli army.
* Participant # 3 is a 23 year old married woman, mother of 1, Ba’al Teshuva (first generation - newly religious).

***The Interviews:***

* + Participants were asked 16 questions surrounding their education experience at the MCY.
  + The duration of the interview was 45-60 minutes.
  + The participants were asked permission to be audio-taped.
  + The participants have **verbally** given their consent to participate in the test.
  + The participant’s true identity will not be used in this report.

***The Instrument:***

* + The instrument included 16 questions.
  + Each question also included additional probe questions.

**The Questions**

1. Describe your family background: parent’s profession, education, religious inclination, and any rabbinic relationship.

**Probe:** Can you tell me about your husband family?

**Problem with question:** None. Good question and probe.

1. What are your reasons for choosing the MCY for your academic education?

**Probe:** Did you consider other institutions? Which one? Why was it turned down?

**Problem with question:** None. Good question and probes.

1. What are your reasons for choosing your field of study?

**Probe**: Did you consider other professions? Which one? Why was it turned down?

Did you have a professional advisor?

**Problem with question:** None. Good question and probes.

1. What are the benefits that an ultra-orthodox female student brings to her academic studies that a student of other background does not (previous education, outlook at life, commitment)?

**Probe:** How do you think these advantages help you during your studies?

**Problem with question:** None. Good question and Probe.

1. What are the disadvantages (if any) that an ultra-orthodox female student holds that student of other backgrounds may not?

**Probe:** How do you overcome these obstacles?

**Problem with question:** None. Good question and Probe.

1. What challenges are you facing during your academic studies (child baring, parenting, financial, religious, academic material)?

**Probe:** How do you overcome these obstacles?

**Problem with question:** Participants was uncomfortable with the use of the term “challenges”.

**Action:** The phrase “if any” should be added in the question.

Or eliminate this question, since it is included in previous question.

1. What position does your parents, family, and Rabbis, hold regarding your academic studies?

**Probe:** None.

**Problem with question:** None. Good question.

1. Describe the support received from your environment regarding to your academic studies.

**Probe:** None.

**Problem with question:** Duplicate question. Participants answered this in previous questions.

**Action:** Eliminate question.

1. What are your hopes and the expectations upon your graduation from the MCY?

**Probe:** None.

**Problem with question:** Duplicate question. Participants covered this in questions 2 & 3.

**Action:** Eliminate question.

1. What are the areas that have been enriched by your academic studies at the MCY?

**Probe:** What transformation have you experienced as a woman?

**Problem with question:** Since participants included women issues here next question becomes redundant.

**Action:** Combine this question with the next question and eliminate next question.

1. What transformation have you experienced as a woman, as a result of your academic studies?

**Problem with question:** Duplicate question. Participants covered this in previous questions

**Action:** Eliminate question.

1. Have you experienced a transformation in your self-esteem and sale-image as a result of your academic studies at the MCY? Please describe.

**Probe:** Do you think others perceive you differently now?

**Problem with question:** None. Good question and Probe.

1. Do you believe your academic education will contribute to the perception of the ultra-orthodox community within the Israeli society? Please explain.

**Probe:** None.

**Problem with question:** Sensitive question, and could be leading, or could sound bias.

**Action**: If question raises discomfort, skip to next question. Next question also touches

cross-culture relations.

1. Has there been a transformation in your attitude in becoming an open-minded towards the secular community in Israel? Please describe.

**Probe:** Has you view of the secular community changed as a result of your academic studies?

**Problem with question:** None. Good question and probe.

1. Have your religious beliefs changed as a result of your academic education at the MCY?

Probe: Do you feel that your faith became stronger?

**Problem with question:** None. This is an important question (suggested by the academic advisor).

**Action:** None.

1. Would you like to share any other ideas related to your academic learning experience?

(Optional question) **Action:** add the following probe:

What can be done to enable more ultra-orthodox young women to obtain academic education? (Optional question).

1. What can be done to enable more ultra-orthodox young women to obtain academic education?

**Problem:** During the pilot test, this question was necessary and needed answers:

**Action:** Add the above question:

**Revised instrument:**

1. Describe your family background: parent’s profession, education, religious inclination, and any rabbinic relationship.

**Probe:** Can you tell me about your husband family?

1. What are your reasons for choosing the MCY for your academic education?

**Probe:** Did you consider other institutions? Which one? Why was it turned down?

1. What are your reasons for choosing your field of study?

**Probe**: Did you consider other professions? Which one? Why was it turned down?

Did you have a professional advisor?

1. What are the benefits that an ultra-orthodox female student brings to her academic studies that a student of other background does not (previous education, outlook at life, commitment)?

**Probe:** How do you think these advantages help you during your studies?

1. What are the disadvantages or challenges (if any) that an ultra-orthodox female student has that student of other backgrounds may not?

**Probe:** How do you overcome these obstacles?

1. What position does your parents, family, and Rabbis, hold regarding your academic studies?
2. What are the areas that have been enriched by your academic studies at the MCY?

**Probe:** What transformation have you experienced as a woman?

1. Have you experienced a transformation in your self-esteem and sale-image as a result of your academic studies at the MCY? Please describe.

**Probe:** Do you think others perceive you differently now?

1. Do you believe your academic education will contribute to the perception of the ultra-orthodox community within the Israeli society? Please explain.
2. Has there been a transformation in your attitude in becoming an open-minded towards the secular community in Israel? Please describe.

**Probe:** Has you view of the secular community changed as a result of your academic studies?

1. Have your religious beliefs changed as a result of your academic education at the MCY?

**Probe:** Do you feel that your faith became stronger?

1. What can be done to enable more ultra-orthodox young women to obtain academic

education?

1. Would you like to share any other ideas or thoughts related to your academic experience?

**Summary**

All three participants were able to provide good and candid information on their perception of their higher education at MCY: a subject that deeply mattered to them. Their feelings and opinions were very relevant and strong. The questions of the instrument for the most part were effective, and led to a lengthy and informative discussion flow. Some were redundant and needed to be skipped. All participants have conducted some sort of research in their studies and were aware of the purpose of this test as well as the research methodology. They were comfortable sharing their opinions, insights, expressed some personal and religious principals, and hoped that it would help the MCY in a long run. The researcher felt she was trusted by the participants, who shown full cooperation.

The instrument needed some modification. Probe questions were not always needed since the information was flowing very well. Several questions were repetitive and made the interview lengthy and cumbersome. Upon the completion of the pilot test, another question needed answers, and therefore was added later. As a result of this pilot test, the researcher reduced the total number of questions to thirteen.

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| **Revised Interview Protocol** | |
| Script: Good morning (or good afternoon). My name is Ruth Friedman and I am a graduate student at Florida Atlantic University in the College of Education.  In my Internship course (EDA 7940) through the Department of Educational Leadership at the FAU College of Education, I am conducting a qualitative study that aims to evaluate the role and impact that academic education holds in bringing forth a social and economic change.  As an educator and a traditional Jewish woman, who has recently moved to Israel, I have a special interest in studying the Charedi (ultra-orthodox) community’s efforts in expanding their ability in helping themselves towards academic and economic development, and thus contribute to the Israeli society.  This study aims to explore the unique environment of the Charedi (ultra-orthodox) College in Jerusalem; focus on the female students’ perception of their Higher Education experience; evaluate the transformative changes that they may have, and the effect it holds in their personal and social arenas.  At the first phase of this study, the primary assignment is to design and pilot test a survey / interview instrument, using the qualitative approach.  Your opinions are highly valued. Students who agree to participate in this interview will be asked the questions listed below on this protocol. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The information will remain confidential.  If you wish to have access to the results of this study, they will be readily available to you upon the completion of the test. This interview is confidential, and it will be used to pilot test the validity and reliability of the instrument.  If you have any questions pertaining to this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at the e-mail address or phone number listed below.  As a university could not exist without its students, this project would not exist without your participation. I wish you great success in your academic and professional future.  Thank you very much for taking part in this study.  Ruth Friedman, M.Ed  RuthF16@gmail.com  054-926-0685  My research is:  The Transformative Changes in Female Students At the Charedi (ultra-Orthodox) College in Jerusalem.  The purpose of this study is:  1) To determine your perceptions of your academic education at the Charedi  College in Jerusalem.  2) To field test items that should be included for a survey instrument for a larger  population.  I am not associated with FAU except as a student and am merely doing research on this topic.  **Thank you for completing the consent form.**  Do you have any questions before we start?  Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. | |
| Questions and Probes | Notes |
| 1. Describe your family background: parent’s profession, education, religious inclination, and any rabbinic relationship.   **Probe:** Can you tell me about your husband family? |  |
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| 1. What are your reasons for choosing the MCY for your academic education?   **Probe:** Did you consider any other educational institution?  Which one? Whywas it turned down? |  |
| 1. What are your reasons for choosing your field of study?   **Probe**: Did you consider other professions? Which one?Why was it turned down? Did you have a professional advisor? |  |
| 1. What are the benefits that an ultra-orthodox female student brings to her academic studies that a student of other background does not (previous education, outlook at life, commitment)? **Probe:** How do you think these advantages help you during your studies? 2. What are the disadvantages or challenges (if any) an ultra-orthodox female student has that student of other backgrounds may not?   **Probe:** How do you overcome these obstacles? |  |
| 1. What position does your parents, family, and Rabbis, hold regarding your academic studies? |  |
| 1. What are the areas that have been enriched by your academic studies at the MCY?   **Probe:** What transformation have you experienced as a woman? |  |
| 1. Have you experienced a transformation in your self-esteem and sale-image as a result of your academic studies at the MCY? Please describe.   **Probe:** Do you think others perceive you differently now? |  |
| 1. Do you believe your academic education will contribute to the perception of the ultra-orthodox community within the Israeli society? Please explain.   **Probe:** None. |  |
| 1. Has there been a transformation in your attitude in becoming an open-minded towards the secular community in Israel? Please describe.   **Probe:** Has you view of the secular community changed as a result  of your academic studies? |  |
| 1. Have your religious beliefs changed as a result of your academic education at the MCY?   **Probe:** Do you feel that your faith became stronger? |  |
| 1. What can be done to enable more ultra-orthodox young women to obtain academic education? |  |
| 1. Would you like to share any other ideas related to your academic learning experience? |  |
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| Thank you.  This research is partial fulfillment of an Internship class.  Thank you so much for your time.  I appreciate your time and wish you well in your future academic endeavors. | |