

Bar Ilan University

**Uncovering the Story:
The Experiences of Modern Orthodox Married Women
who Remove their Head Covering in Mid-Life**

Naama Singal

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Abstract

This study examines the experiences of married, Modern Orthodox Jewish women who during midlife removed their head covering. It centers on the way the women negotiate with the experience of living within their society and with themselves. For this purpose one-to-one, in-depth personal interviews were conducted with fifteen married women who removed their head covering in midlife. Along the study, their experiences were considered firstly through the lens of their identity and those around them, secondly through their reasoning for removing their head covering, thirdly through their negotiation with their multiple values and multiple selves and lastly through the prism of their positioning in midlife.

Whereas rational reasoning, *halachik* solutions and even feminist perspective may appease those searching for the rational of these women's decisions, the terminology did not respect the women's engagement, agency or complex experience, and paradoxically contributed to silencing and compressing the women to conform into preconceived notions of epistemology.

What emerged from the women's voices was an awakening of the multiple self in midlife. A nuanced, complex and multifaceted experience, which allowed the women to discover and rediscover aspects of their identity while in constant flux and negotiation with the dictates of society and religion, without necessitating the abandonment of either.