

Torah-Observant Jewish Married Couples: The Influence of Mandated Abstinence of
Physical Touch and Marital Maintenance

by

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ABSTRACT

Maintaining sexual desire as the marriage endures is a challenge, especially as it involves the interplay of seemingly opposing tensions of novelty, autonomy, and closeness. Difficulties can arise when autonomy, which requires spousal distancing, is perceived as a marital threat and therefore suppressed. This dissertation investigates whether prosocial marital distancing can nurture autonomy and promote sexual desire.

Torah-observant Jewish married couples practice family purity, a Jewish law forbidding sexual relations during menstruation and shortly thereafter. During this time couples often avoid sleeping in the same bed, physical touch, and behaviors that can instigate a sexual encounter. These distancing restrictions are lifted when the wife immerses in a ritual bath. The process repeats at the next menstruation.

This research examined the effects of family purity's marital distancing through two studies. The first involved qualitative interviews of family purity wives ($N = 10$) guided by relational dialectics theory (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Study one findings suggest that family purity wives navigate the three tensions of integration, expression, and certainty. Study one also revealed a new tension, the dialect of restraint. The dialectic of restraint appears to enhance marital communication, heighten the appreciation for the mundane, and help sustain sexual desire.

Study two, the quantitative phase of the research, applied self-expansion theory (Aron & Aron, 1986) to investigate differences between family purity and non-family purity couples. A sample of 90 married Jewish dyads ($N = 180$) participated in a cross-sectional online questionnaire. Findings suggest that while non-practicing couples report greater self-expansion, family purity couples report greater sexual closeness. Family

purity couples also report the same closeness and sexual closeness ideals, whereas non-practicing couples reported divergent ideals. Non-practicing family purity husbands had the greatest reported discrepancy between ideal and actual sexual closeness.

The combined findings suggest that sanctioned prosocial distancing as practiced by family purity couples enables the integration of cognitive growth and mitigates the threat of autonomy. Prosocial distancing within the family purity marriage appears to provide the wife space for autonomy that in turn provokes novelty and sexual desire. Findings are discussed in relation to theoretical contributions, study limitations, and future directions.

DEDICATION

For my babies, Joseph Samuel Carey Black and Sophie Elizabeth Carey Black. Thank you, God, for this privilege and honor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to help couples sustain happy marriages, the American Psychological Association (2018) suggests partners practice open communication (e.g., talk about deep and personal issues), incorporate a routine date night, and pursue ways to enhance sexual intimacy to ensure both parties' physical and emotional needs are met. At the same time, couples are advised to protect their autonomy and set boundaries. Protecting autonomy is essential to enhancing marital intimacy (Bowen, 1978) and is associated with greater marital and sexual satisfaction (Ferreira et al., 2014; Perel, 2006; Schnarch, 1997; Skowron, 2000). Navigating the push and pull of autonomy and closeness, however, is difficult and a common reason couples seek counseling (Ben-Ari, 2012). Maintaining this integration of closeness and autonomy requires effort and how-to knowledge.

Although there is a large body of literature promoting marital closeness, there is a lack of advice delineating specific communicative behaviors that promote distance in a prosocial way. Instead, behaviors intended to create distance are antisocial (e.g., destructive conflict, avoidance) and do not promote marital satisfaction (Dainton & Gross, 2008) or are placed within the context of maintaining non-voluntary relationships (i.e., work-place relationships) (Hess, 2000). Research, however, emphasizes the importance of maintaining autonomy “while being closely connected to the partner” (Kluwer, Karremans, Riedijk, & Knee, 2020, p. 603). Prosocial ways to incorporate a sense of self have not been identified. While distance between spouses can be conceptualized as the “dark side” of interpersonal communication research (Spitzberg &

Cupach, 1997), this paper hopes to add a “bright side” (Scharp & Hall, 2019) to distance as a potential prosocial maintenance behavior in marriage.

Esther Perel (2006), a psychotherapist specializing in sexuality, argues that “instead of always striving for closeness couples may be better off cultivating their separate selves” (p. 37). Perel (2006) underscores that mystery and personal space are important in nurturing sexual desire and a “precondition for maintaining interest and desire in a relationship” (p. 37). At the same time, intimacy and closeness are key ingredients for the couples’ sexual satisfaction (Frost, McClelland, & Dettman, 2017; Stulhofer, Ferreira, & Landripet, 2010). Some findings suggest that too much closeness smothers sexual desire (Perel, 2006; Sims & Meana, 2010). The findings, together, suggest that closeness and autonomy—while seemingly polar opposites—are essential for a healthy marriage, are difficult to balance, and might enhance a couple’s sexual well-being and marital endurance.

Despite the large body of research promoting ways to increase marital closeness, specific ways to balance closeness with autonomy within the marriage are lacking. A perspective from the communication discipline has much to add because both verbal and nonverbal communication within the marriage serve to facilitate satisfactory sexual experiences (Kleinplatz et al., 2017; Menard et al., 2015).

This dissertation intends to determine whether prosocial distancing behaviors, including routine and intentional avoidance of physical touch, can improve marital health. Based on a search of the literature, intentional avoidance of touch as a prosocial maintenance behavior has not been systematically investigated from a communication perspective, and outcomes of these behaviors remain untested. The aim of this

dissertation is to focus attention on this understudied issue and explore effects of prosocial avoidance of physical touch on marriage. Torah-observant Jewish married couples give us a unique window to observe these interactions.

Relatively unknown outside of the Torah-observant Jewish community, Jewish law dictates that married couples refrain from physical touch during and for a prescribed time after the wife's menstruation. This practice is called *Taharat Hamichpacha* or family purity (FP). The practice entails periodic and circumscribed breaks from physical touch and behaviors evoking physical affection. It has been an integral component of the Jewish tradition for centuries and is still embraced today. Therefore, an investigation of married Jewish couples who practice FP offers a unique opportunity to explore how systematic abstinence from physical touch and intimacy can influence marital well-being.

Findings offer a first look at this understudied phenomenon and will hopefully add to the discussion on relational and sexual maintenance behaviors. Because there is a general lack of knowledge outside of the Torah-observant Jewish community of the FP practice, there are many misconceptions. It is important to explain FP, its biblical and rabbinic roots, and the reasons it has endured.

In order to investigate the impact of FP on marital health, this research employed two studies and two research methodologies. Study one, a qualitative inquiry, allowed for in-depth and rich accounts of Jewish married women currently practicing FP. Study two, a quantitative analysis, allowed for comparisons on relational health outcomes between married Jewish couples practicing FP and married Jewish couples not practicing FP.

Relational dialectic theory (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) provide a theoretical

framework for the qualitative study (i.e., study one), and self-expansion theory provided a theoretical framework for the comparative analysis (i.e., study two).

Family Purity

In an effort to make aspects of daily life sacred, Jewish laws define the rules in the three pillars of Judaism: *kashrut* (kosher), *Shabbat*, and *Taharat HaMishpacha* (family purity). Kosher laws dictate how food is prepared and which foods are permitted. The Sabbath laws command that from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday all work be interrupted. Finally, family purity laws enumerate the restrictions for sexual and physical intimacy between married couples. Sexuality within the marriage and women's rights are so significant to Jewish law that it consumes one-sixth of the Talmudic literature (Lamm, 1987; Rockman, 1993).

Family purity (FP) instructs that each month, from the onset of the wife's menses, all physical intimacy and affection are to be discontinued. At the cessation of menses, 7 preparatory days must pass to ensure there is no residual uterine bleeding. This timeframe during, and shortly after, the wife's menses is termed *niddah*. At the end of the seventh "clean" day, the woman immerses herself in the *mikveh*, or ritual bath, and she is then *tehora*, or pure. Upon the woman's return home following the mikveh, and after the prescribed abstinence from physical contact, husband and wife are expected to resume intimate relations (Guterman, 2006). From the moment the wife begins her menstrual period, and until she immerses herself in the mikveh, she and her husband are not permitted to be physically intimate. Moreover, all physical touch is forbidden, including holding hands and passing objects. Typically, when the woman becomes engaged to be married, she learns about these laws from a *khalla* teacher (i.e., bride teacher), who is

usually a rabbi's wife (Petok, 2001).

FP laws are meant to sanctify physical and emotional intimacy between husband and wife. The idea of sanctification and its effect on the family are not new to the academic landscape, though the idea behind sanctification is not widespread (see Burr, Marks, & Day, 2012; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). Scholars suggest that people can perceive virtually anything as sacred, and when they do, they invest more time and energy into it (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005).

There has been much debate about the meaning and benefits of observing FP law. There are biblical interpretations that paint menstruating women as pariahs (Steinberg, 1997). Kendrick (1994) suggests “women's blood, dangerous blood, calls forth Leviticus' injunctions and warning of contamination” (p. 145). Today, while Jews and non-Jews may disparage FP and criticize the pejorative term of impurity that is associated with menses, there are advocates within the Torah-observant community espousing the benefits of FP (Telushkin, 1991).

Importantly, FP laws do not disparage sexual relations, nor do they subvert the role of their sexuality. Rather, sexual intimacy in the Jewish marriage is considered a wife's privilege, her husband's responsibility, and an act to be enjoyed by both (Ribner & Kleinplatz, 2007). As written in their *ketubah* (marital contract), the husband has three biblical obligations, or commandments, to his wife: to provide food, clothing, and sexual relations (Telushkin, 1991). The latter commandment, providing sexual relations, is known as *onah*, which can be translated as “her time” (Zimmerman, 2005). Ribner and Kleinplatz (2007) further explain that husbands are instructed to bring their wives to orgasm before they ejaculate, which gives emphasis to the importance of the woman's

pleasure. Sex on the sabbath is encouraged to produce harmony in the home on this holy day (Ribner & Kleinplatz, 2007). Jewish scholars describe the bedroom as the “Holy of Holies” because of God’s presence in the bedroom (Aiken, 2008). In addition, it is a *mitzvah* (i.e., blessing) for husband and wife to have sexual relations during the time the wife cannot become pregnant (e.g., already pregnant, in menopause, or infertile) (Ribner & Kleinplatz, 2007). Here, we see Jewish scholars affirming sex for its innate pleasure and interpreting that sex is not solely for procreation.

Benefits of Family Purity

While the fundamental religious reason within Torah-observant Judaism to observe FP laws is because they are God-given and beyond human comprehension (Steinberg, 1997), scholars underscore secular benefits, such as improving the couple’s relationship (Lamm, 1987; Telushkin, 1991; Tendler, 1988), enhancing sexual desire (Telushkin, 1991), improving chances for fertility (Tendler, 1988), and positive health outcomes (Tendler, 1988). Importantly, these ancillary benefits have been anecdotal and remain scientifically untested.

As to the positive link between FP and fertility, looking closely at the timeline of niddah, the couple resumes sexual relations approximately 12 days after the onset of menses, which generally approximates the time of ovulation (Tendler, 1988). Some couples may experience halachic infertility, meaning ovulation occurs before the couple resumes sexual relations and, thus, causes distress for the couple who wants to get pregnant.

As for the link between FP and sexual desire, women tend to report peaks of sexual desire during the time of ovulation (i.e., around two weeks after menstruation)

(Bullivant et al., 2004; Stanislaw & Rice, 1988), which, according to FP, is the time husband and wife are encouraged resume intimate relations. Proponents of FP have also suggested that low rates of cervical cancer may be attributed to this practice of abstinence (Tendler, 1988). While it is noted that Israeli-Jewish women have lower rates of cervical cancer compared to their non-Jewish peers (Menczer, 2003), it is difficult to parse out the family purity ritual from other factors absent from Orthodox Jews, such as multiple sexual partners and unhealthy behaviors like smoking (Menczer, 2003).

Despite the significance of FP within the Torah-observant community, FP laws are generally unknown to non-Torah-observant Jews and non-Jews and, thus, promulgates deprecating myths, such as the idea that Jewish couples only have sex through a “hole in the sheet” (Ribner & Kleinplatz, 2007). Disparaging FP deprives the community at large from learning about FP and potential benefits to marital maintenance.

Family Purity in Biblical and Rabbinic Law

You shall not approach a woman in her time of unclean separation, to uncover her nakedness.

— Leviticus 18:19

During a woman’s period and 7 days after its cessation, she is *tahmay*, which means impure (Telushkin, 1991). Importantly, *tahmay* also applies to other rituals relating to the Temple precincts in ancient Jerusalem. For example, any man or woman was forbidden to enter the Jewish Temple if they had direct contact with a corpse. They would be *tahmay* for 7 days. Moreover, punishment for transgressions of the *tahmay* were severe. Those who broke *tahmay* were to be “cut off from [their] people,” (Leviticus 7:21; Leviticus 20:18). Such punishments for refusing to circumcise a son, eating

leavened bread on Passover, or eating on Yom Kippur were just as severe (Tendler, 1988). After the first Temple was destroyed in 586 BCE and the second in 70 CE, these Temple restrictions no longer applied, but restrictions regarding a woman's menstrual period persisted and remain in full force today among Torah-observant Jews.

Biblical law distinguishes menstruation from other types of uterine bleeding. Whereas menstrual bleeding required 7 days of separation between husband and wife, all other types of uterine bleeding required 12 days of separation. However, in practice, this distinction between different types of bleeding was confusing, and therefore rabbis dictated that all sexual relations are discontinued for a full 7 days after the woman sees the last evidence of blood (Telushkin, 1991).

Before sundown on the fifth day of the menstrual cycle, the woman performs a *bedika*, an internal examination, by swabbing her vaginal tract with a cloth or cotton-wrapped finger (Tendler, 1988). The laws delineating what counts as the presence of blood, size of stain on the *bedika* cloth, or determining the onset of menstruation each month are comprehensive (for a complete review of these laws, see Tendler, 1988). The woman performs her internal examinations or "checks" twice a day for 7 days. After there is an absence of blood, the Torah states, "...then shall she count 7 days and then may she immerse herself in the mikveh." (Leviticus 15:28). Upon successful completion of the mikveh, she is *tehora*, meaning ritually pure.

Before immersing in the mikveh, the woman must be cleansed to make sure nothing comes between her and the water. She cleans every inch of her body, soaks in a bathtub, cuts her nails to fingertip length to ensure proper removal of dirt, and makes certain there is no loose skin on the beds of her nails. Her teeth must be carefully cleaned,

her jewelry removed, her belly button free of lint, and her hair detangled. She is not to eat meat the day before mikveh, as meat can get lodged in teeth. A warm shower precedes her immersion into the mikveh.

Mikveh preparations are often completed at home, but may also be performed at the location of the mikveh. The mikveh water is generally warm, and the pool consists of seven steps down into the water (the seven steps are said to symbolize completeness). Immediately after total immersion, the woman recites a *bracha* (prayer) acknowledging God who commanded her to observe the laws of niddah and mikveh. A second immersion is then performed.

The mikveh ritual is strictly supervised by a female attendant, and the woman's niddah status remains in effect until she immerses in a mikveh. A new Jewish community will build a mikveh before the synagogue or acquisition of a Torah, which illustrates the importance of FP for the Jewish people.

The woman declares the onset of menses, the termination of menstruation, and is in charge of her *bedika* (internal checks). Her testimony about these key stages is taken as absolute; her husband must conduct all of his actions accordingly (Tendler, 1988). From the onset of menses until she immerses in the mikveh, she is accorded the legal status of *niddah* (a menstruating woman), and the law prohibits all sexual contact and forbids the husband from "approaching a woman for sexual relations" (Leviticus 18:19). Since husband and wife live under the same roof, however, maintaining strict rules for physical distance poses a challenge.

To ensure husband and wife are not physically intimate during niddah, rabbis instituted a number of safeguards, or *harchakot* (Guterman, 2008). To prevent accidental

touch, couples may not directly pass items to each other or sit on the same surface. When dining, it is customary to place a symbol on the table, such as a candlestick, to remind them of their respective roles. Couples should not eat off of each other's plates, as this can be construed as a type of affection. Further, couples are instructed to be thoughtful of the other while undressing and cannot share a bed or blankets during niddah. This is why a typical Torah-observant bedroom has two beds. Other acts that hint at affection while the wife is in niddah, such as serving food on a plate or drawing a bath for her husband, should not be completed in his presence (Tendler, 1988). The "two weeks on, two weeks off" continues until menopause and is only interrupted by pregnancy and nursing (Guterman, 2008).

Outcomes of Family Purity

Research among modern Orthodox Jews has suggested that the level of religious observance is negatively correlated to transgressions of harchakot, and couples are more likely to transgress during week two (i.e., clean days following cessation of menses) than during week one (i.e., the actual menstruation period) (Guterman, 2008). Research has not addressed, however, the relational outcomes of this practice.

Despite their physical "distance," husband and wife are encouraged to connect in non-physical ways (Telushkin, 1991). Taking a walk together without holding hands is just one example. During niddah, husband and wife are to act respectfully in regard to affection but without any physical expression of love (Lamm, 1987). In turn, it has been suggested that this improves verbal communication, further develops the emotional facets of their relationship, and enhances their friendship (Telushkin, 1991). Tendler (1988) explains that the blessing recited under the *chuppah* (wedding canopy) refers to the

couple as *chasan v'kalah* (bride and groom) and as *rayim ahuvim* (loving friends). Hence, romantic love is meant to coexist with friendship. Tandler (1988) further explains that there must be fulfillment during the ebb and flow of the marriage and that FP can aid in the development of this lasting and sustained contentment. Exploring the limits of this conjecture is a primary focus of this dissertation.

Physical separation during niddah is said to create a monthly “honeymoon” and rejuvenate the marriage by leaving the couple desiring each other (Telushkin, 1991). Telushkin (1991) explains that the Talmud addresses the positive effect of separation on a marriage: “The husband becomes over-familiar with his wife and tires of her. Thus, the Torah prohibited her to him so that she may remain as beloved to him as she was on her wedding day” (p. 681).

In addition, Rabbi Lamm (1987) explains that periodic separations may help married couples develop an “I-Thou” relationship as opposed to an “I-It” relationship. As expressed by existentialist philosopher Martin Buber (as cited in Broome, 2009), a partner in an “I-It” relationship views the other as an object to be conquered. In this type of relationship, a partner manipulates the other for their own needs and is characterized by deception, pretense, and dominance. However, an “I-Thou” relationship involves a partner appreciating their counterpart, does not foist their views, and accepts the other unconditionally (Broome, 2009).

Though the practice of niddah has endured the test of time, there is a dearth of scientific study specifically exploring its effects on marital well-being. Thus, this dissertation, which specifically examines separation/distance engendered by niddah, is a vanguard study. Hopefully it will generate future scholarly attention to this potentially

prosocial practice of creating closeness/separation and uncover new tools for sustaining and improving marital communication.

CHAPTER 2

MARITAL MAINTENANCE

In the vast body of literature spanning many fields of relationship expertise, marital maintenance is a common theme. In general, maintenance behaviors have been shown to correlate with increased commitment and marital satisfaction (Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013; Weigal & Ballard-Reisch, 2001), as well as relationship sanctity (Stafford, 2016).

While definitions vary, generally speaking, maintenance is defined as any action utilized by one or both partners to sustain or enhance their relationship. Prosocial maintenance behaviors are linked to relationship love, liking, and satisfaction (Dainton, 2015; Dainton, Stafford, Canary, 1994; Oglosky & Bowers, 2013; Stafford, 2010). Counterintuitively, the longer the marriage, the less the couple uses maintenance behaviors (Oglosky & Bowers, 2012).

In addition to prosocial maintenance behaviors, couples employ negative antisocial behaviors in the hopes of maintaining the relationship. These include infidelity, jealousy, and avoidance (Dainton, 2015). For example, a partner might flirt or have an affair with the intention of preventing marital boredom or to increase their partner's interest, which from their perspective maintains the marriage. These antisocial actions, not surprisingly, have been negatively associated with marital satisfaction and commitment (Dainton, 2015). In light of this, more prosocial maintenance behaviors aimed specifically at preventing marital boredom should be identified. Given that research has struggled to identify prosocial autonomy-enhancing strategies (Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Baxter & Simon, 1993), maintaining regular healthy physical distance from

one's spouse, as practiced in family purity (FP), should be considered as a way to stimulate autonomy and present novelty in the marriage.

According to Harasymchuk, Clouter, Peetz, and Lebreton (2017), married couples know how to prevent boredom yet neglect to act. As noted above, the longer the marriage, the less a couple uses positive maintenance strategies (Oglosky & Bowers, 2012). For example, when faced with marital boredom, partners consistently report they know they should increase excitement and enhance novelty but, in practice, resort to easy and familiar activities (Harasymchuk et al., 2017). Harasymchuk and colleagues (2017) suggest couples fall back upon familiar activities because novel activities require effort and creativity. In such instances, rather than engaging in novel experiences, couples resort to warm, open, ceremonial expressions of affection and general togetherness strategies (Dindia & Baxter, 1987). While these are positive relationship behaviors, they do not increase novelty. Accordingly, practicing FP and the sanctioned distance it provides might be one way to incorporate novelty in an attainable way.

Studies have also investigated the impact of long-distance relationships on relationship harmony (Ellis & Ledbetter, 2015). One might assume long-distance relationships fare worse in terms of satisfaction, trust, and stability compared to partners in a geographically close relationship; however, long distance relationships report similar or even higher ratings of the satisfaction, trust, and stability (Ellis & Ledbetter, 2015; Stafford, 2010). Perhaps creating "long distance" with co-resident marital relationships is impossible, but if the FP framework can mimic distance, it may also engender positive relationship outcomes.

In summary, FP couples provide a unique opportunity to test how distance engendered by niddah might contribute to creating novelty and provide opportunities for autonomy. This dissertation, encompassing two studies, intends to unpack whether routine breaks in physical touch can be viewed as a prosocial relational maintenance strategy and explore its communicative effects on the marriage. Study one, using a theoretical framework of relational dialectics theory (RDT; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), employs qualitative methods to interview married women practicing FP. Study two, with a backdrop of self-expansion theory (SET, Aron & Aron, 1986), uses quantitative methods to assess differences between married Jewish couples practicing FP and married Jewish couples not practicing FP.

The dissertation is organized in the following manner. Each study reviews the guiding theoretical framework, methods, findings, and study-specific discussion. Chapter 3 reviews relational dialectics theory (RDT; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), which provides a holistic perspective of closeness and distance that lends itself well to the qualitative investigation of women's experiences practicing family purity. RDT offers operational terms for exploring closeness and distance as pro-relational constructs. Chapter 4 covers self-expansion theory (SET; Aron & Aron, 1986), which suggests that people are motivated to expand their sense of self by forming close relationships by highlighting the importance of novelty and autonomy to sustain relationships. This theory frames the research questions explored in a quantitative investigation of couples practicing family purity and couples not practicing family purity in study two. After describing each study in turn, the final chapter offers a combined discussion of the studies' theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical Foundations

Two well-cited theories offer a framework upon which this dissertation will be guided to systematically explore the effects of FP on marital communication.

First, relational dialectics theory (RDT; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), provides a holistic perspective of closeness and distance that lends itself well to study one, a qualitative investigation of women's experiences with practicing family purity. RDT offers operational terms for exploring closeness and distance as pro-relational constructs. Second, self-expansion theory (SET; Aron & Aron, 1986) suggests that people are motivated to expand their sense of self through close relationships and also encourage the importance of novelty and autonomy to sustain relationships. This theory frames the research questions explored in a quantitative investigation of Jewish couples practicing and not practicing family purity in study two.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY ONE: RELATIONAL DIALECTIC THEORY

Dialectic ideas date back to Chinese and Greek philosophers (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). For example, in the bipolarities of the Taoist reality, yin and yang promote the notion of ceaseless change. Yin is the condition of darkness, while yang is the condition of light (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Yin and yang represent the constant interplay of opposing forces and contradicting tensions experienced in life.

RDT is founded in the work of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogism, wherein social life is not understood by the inside voice but is created through push/pull and dialogue. Bakhtin (as cited in Broome, 2009) posits that people who engage in dialogue embody *tension-ality* and are bound by a common understanding while also maintaining their autonomy. Similar to yin and yang, Bakhtin describes an interplay of expression and non-expression, certainty and uncertainty, conventionality and uniqueness, and integration and separation (Broome, 2009). Born from the concept of dialogism, communication scholars Baxter and Montgomery (1996) theorized that interpersonal communication is comprised of contradictory discourses, and Baxter (2004) further describes the communicative aspects of managing these contradictions as healthy to relationship functioning.

The dialectical perspective arose out of a need to understand inherent contradictions and opposing forces within close relationships (i.e., the need to be close to a partner and also maintain separation) (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Baxter and Montgomery (1996) review many theories suggesting that increased closeness is associated with improved relationships. The same applies with increased openness and

certainty. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) broaden the landscape by encouraging the “both/and” quality of personal relationships. In this way of thinking, partners experience seemingly contradictory needs, such as a need for closeness and distance, a desire for certainty and surprise, and a want of openness with one’s partner while also preserving privacy. From the dialectical perspective, healthy relationships navigate the constant interplay of the push and pull of contradictory forces and demonstrate how contradictory needs are satisfied and managed (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Applying the RDT perspective to the practice of FP allows us to investigate how the prescribed closeness and distance (niddah) might maintain a marriage.

Assumptions of RDT

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) list the four assumptions of the dialectical perspective. They include contradiction, change, praxis, and totality. To understand the first assumption, it is important to see that Baxter and Montgomery (1996) liberate the pejorative meaning of contradiction. They instead view contradiction as inherent to social life and as a vehicle for change. In their lexicon, contradiction is “the dynamic interplay between unified oppositions” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 8). Contradiction is meaningful because there is always a counterpart. For instance, novelty implies its contradiction—predictability; without predictability, novelty would lose its meaning. The same is true in the reverse. Rather than viewing contradictions as binary, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) encourage a more complex concept of contradiction—overlapping domains of dominant forces juxtaposed with less dominant forces that, thus, encourage multivocal contradiction(s).

Second, contradictions are constantly at play and are essential to the study of relational communication because contradictions promote change, the second assumption of RDT (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Here, change is understood as the interplay of instability and stability (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), and the tension resulting from simultaneous opposing forces creates a pressure toward change (Baxter & Simon, 1993).

The third assumption of the dialectical perspective is praxis, which refers to the communicative act of constructing the future out of the past. That is, partners respond to dialectical needs that they have formed in the past based on past experience. At the same time that partners respond to their dialectical needs, they are in effect altering future dialectical circumstances (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Baxter and Montgomery (1998) further explain that praxis requires addressing past, present, and future. Here, Bakhtin's (1981) "utterance chain" comes into play.

An "utterance" is described by Bakhtin (1981) as the place where the multivocal interplay between dominant and subordinate tendencies are realized. Utterance is integral to RDT and can be viewed as a "link in a chain of dialogue" that is bound by preceding links and future links (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 27). Links in the dialogic chain can be distant or proximal. Distant links "represent the boundary with the already-spoken of the distant past that occurred prior to the current conversation" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 27). For example, recollections of occurrences prior to the current dialogue represent distal links. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) explain that, when we speak, we use words that are informed by memories and past conversations.

Proximal links are those occurring during the current conversation. These include prior utterances within the current conversation and its influence on the real-time

utterance (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Thus, real-time utterance is formed by the distal and proximal past. Further, real-time utterances are also influenced by anticipated future responses of the addressee and super-addressee. The addressee is the partner in the given dialogue, while the super-addressee is the “set of normalized expectations that lies beyond the immediate conversation” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 28). Put simply, when we communicate, we anticipate what is culturally appropriate.

In summary, every utterance chain is bound by four dialogues: 1) the already-spoken utterance of the distant past; 2) the already-spoken utterance within the immediate conversation; 3) the anticipated response of the addressee; and 4) the anticipated response of the super-addressee (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). In addition to these four dialogues, there is the ongoing interplay of dominant forces of unity and subordinate forces of difference.

The final assumption of RDT is totality, referring to the notion that an occurrence is understood in relation to other occurrences and that the world is a process of relations (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). That is, phenomenon interact with phenomena, and one dialectical tension might compete with another tension. Thus, totality underscores the inherent difficulty in obtaining equilibrium when the tensions are constantly at play. Dialectical totality encourages the researcher to think about the interdependencies of contradictions and their interactions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Research Question

There are three main dialectical tensions within RDT: the dialectics of integration, uncertainty, and expression. The dialectic of integration can be thought of as autonomy/connection and separation/closeness. Uncertainty refers to the interplay

between predictability and newness. Expression refers to openness, disclosure, and candor in opposition tension with discretion, privacy, and secrecy.

In RDT, the dialectic of integration is the fundamental force within interpersonal relationships and without connection, relationships have no identity; without autonomy, a person has no identity and thus cannot exist within a relationship (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Therefore, considering family purity through the lens of RDT is useful because family purity laws prescribe mandated times for physical connection and separation. Thus, according to RDT, both poles (connection/separation) are at play. This leads to the first research question, which is addressed in the qualitative study of this dissertation:

RQ1: How do tensions of closeness/distance, novelty/conventionality, openness/closedness, as described by RDT, highlight marital maintenance behaviors for married women practicing family purity?

Methods

Interview Procedures

The goal of study one is to understand the FP experience for Torah-observant married Jewish women and to answer the first research question. I engaged in semi-structured interviews to gain access and learn about an otherwise untapped population. Interviews allowed for rich insight into the FP practice that would otherwise be unavailable. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to determine the structure of the interview and ask specific questions (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Kvale, 1996) that were geared toward answering the research question.

Interviews were designed to provide rich data about the behaviors of Torah-observant Jewish married women during niddah and during tehora (meaning pure when

not in niddah). Since this dissertation is an exploratory, hypothesis-generating exercise, the interviews opened the door for deeper understanding of the lived experiences of practicing FP. All procedures were approved by a university Institutional Review Board (IRB) in March of 2017.

Recruitment

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the topic, it was not known whether a sample of Torah-observant female participants would openly discuss FP, which made it necessary to access a sample of women practicing FP. With the assistance of a Torah-observant woman who served as the study's gatekeeper (Tracy, 2013), the recruitment letter (see Appendix A) was distributed to Torah-observant Jewish women within the gatekeeper's large national and international network. The gatekeeper used WhatsApp (a messaging service owned by Facebook) and private Facebook groups to reach out to this population. The recruitment was limited to married Jewish women who were currently practicing FP. Based on advice from the gatekeeper and other senior figures within the Torah-observant community, women were targeted because a female investigator questioning a man about FP would be culturally improper. Learning from Torah-observant husbands is an important direction for understanding the impact of FP on couples but is beyond scope of this study.

The gatekeeper estimated that at least 50 women received the recruitment materials. To ensure anonymity, the gatekeeper instructed potential participants to contact the researcher directly either by phone or email. Therefore, the gatekeeper did not know the identity of the interested participants nor who participated in the study. Participants were informed that upon completion of the approximate one-hour interview, they would

receive a \$20 gift card to a popular online retailer. The recruitment process lasted around one month.

Participants

Sixteen women responded to the qualitative study recruitment. Due to scheduling conflicts and preparation for an upcoming Jewish holiday, five of the women were unable to participate. One woman withdrew from an in-progress interview because her child required immediate attention. The final sample consisted of 10 women who successfully completed the interview and were included in the analysis.

Consistent with recruitment materials, all participants were practicing family purity and all had been practicing the entirety of their marriage. Participants ranged in age from 24–54 ($M = 34.4$; $Mdn = 32.5$), were married for 1–29 years ($M = 11.1$; $Mdn = 8$), and had from 0–7 children ($M = 3.2$; $Mdn = 3$). Participants reported various nationalities, including American (7), Israeli (1), Mexican (1), and Chilean (1).

Procedures

I interviewed participants telephonically, and all interviews were audio recorded. Interviews ranged from 19 to 64 minutes, averaged 52 minutes, and totaled 7 hours and 19 minutes. Interviews were transcribed verbatim via a professional transcription service. Upon transcript completion, I compared the transcript to the audio recordings to ensure accuracy. Since many terms within interviews were expressed in Hebrew, it was important for me to clarify their meaning. If there was any confusion regarding a word or phrase, I sent a follow-up email to said participant, asked for clarification, and made any needed corrections. Transcription pages totaled 216 pages.

Measures and Instrumentation

I collected data through semi-structured interviews (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Kvale, 1996), and each interview consisted of 17 interview questions (see Appendix B). Questions were organized with help from advisors and colleagues with an expertise in qualitative interviewing. The interview questions were directed toward answering the first research question: How do tensions of closeness/distance, novelty/conventionality, and openness/closedness, as described by RDT, highlight marital maintenance behaviors for married women practicing family purity?

Sample questions included: “In general, what behaviors do you engage in during niddah?” and “How do these behaviors differ from when you’re not in niddah?” Using a semi-structured interview guide allowed for comparable data across participants. In addition, the open-ended nature of the questions allowed participants to go beyond answering the structured interview questions and added insight. For example, at the time of the interviews, I was eight months pregnant, and since nine of the ten participants had young children and/or were pregnant, the open-ended nature of the questions allowed for a discussion of pregnancy, birthing plans, and breastfeeding. This flexibility also created a welcoming environment and allowed me to engage in “mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation” with participants (Tracy, 2013, p. 132).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Once all interviews were completed and transcribed, they were entered into MAXQDA 2018 software for data management and analysis. After entering the transcripts into MAXQDA, I read and re-read the transcripts to “marinate with the data” and begin sensemaking (Tracy, 2013, p. 188). After this phase, I began the initial coding

my data using *in vivo* codes (Strauss, 1987) to identify important words or phrases that were connected to the topic of interest—in this case, tensions as described by RDT (e.g., wanting to be open and affectionate with their partner but also refrain from sexual suggestion during niddah) and coding for maintenance behaviors to navigate expressed tensions.

Coding for tensions and maintenance behaviors in the data enabled me to place them in their respective categories (e.g., tensions of openness were placed in the overarching dialectic of expression). During the coding process, I was also using the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2014). This method encouraged me to go back to the codes and compare each—code to code and code to category. During this method, maintenance behaviors emerged within the tension categories. This led to three sub-themes that were labeled maintenance behaviors for navigating the tensions during niddah, mikveh, and tehora as expressed by participants.

Next, I engaged in theoretical coding (Glaser, 2005), which provided explanatory power to the categories in relation to my chosen theoretical framework (Birks & Mills, 2011). This iterative process led me to four themes and 16 categories generated from 272 codes. By comparing categories, how they related to each other, and various maintenance behaviors within categories, I was able to interpret my findings as a whole from the theoretical perspective of RDT (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The constant comparison of interviews to interviews, codes to categories, and categories to theory enabled an iterative process that continued until themes of integration, expression, and certainty were exhausted. This method also pushed me toward developing a new tension that addresses the sublimation of sexual intimacy and un-consummated sexual desire during niddah, in

tension with the predictable and approaching time for sexual behavior. I labeled this tension the dialectic of restraint.

Findings

RQ1: “How do tensions of closeness/distance, novelty/conventionality, openness/closedness, as described by RDT, highlight marital maintenance behaviors for married women practicing family purity?”

Findings for this qualitative analysis explore an understudied phenomenon and hope to provide a foundation for inspiring further research into this otherwise understudied marital practice. Although there was a small sample size, this exploratory study opened a window into understanding a systematic approach to physical and emotional intimacy for marriage. While discussions about intimacy are closely guarded within this community, the participants in my study welcomed the opportunity to discuss some of the intricacies of FP. Finally, coding with RDT as a framework lent further understanding to the practice of FP and provided an opportunity to explore how systematic distance can be a prosocial maintenance behavior. This type of systematic distance as prosocial maintenance might inspire a conversation in adding more ways to navigate inevitable marital tension.

Addressing the research question, analysis revealed participants experienced three primary RDT tensions, singularly and in combination. These tensions included certainty, integration, and expression. The results also revealed a fourth tension that may be unique to the FP practice: the dialectic of restraint. Finally, interviews reveal unique maintenance behaviors that help women practicing FP navigate these tensions. In this section, I detail each of these tensions in turn, as well as maintenance behaviors exhibited during niddah,

on mikveh night, and during tehora. I assigned all participants a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality.

Dialectic of Integration: Connection-Autonomy

The dialectic of integration radiates a tension of closeness with distance and has been described as the most fundamental relationship dialectic. This tension is expressed when relationship partners communicate in ways that evoke needs for being interdependent and dependent on their partner. Niddah, the time when menstruation begins and ends on the woman's mikveh night, provided three opportunities that enabled autonomy and space for participants. These opportunities can also be considered prosocial maintenance tools in that they were expressed as positive ways to conceptualize space from her husband as sanctioned time to focus on herself. Since sex and physical touch is disallowed during this time, participants described these aspects of autonomy as time for no questions asked, described below.

No questions asked. Six of the women expressed that niddah created a space for themselves and where their spouse could not feel rejected. Leah, married 17 years, recalled timeframes when she was nursing her babies or pregnant and, therefore, not in niddah for extended times. She noticed that during these long stretches she and her husband would fight about sex, when one or the other might not be in the mood. She said that once her menstrual cycle began again, it was “nice having an off-limits, no-questions-asked time.” Similarly, Rebecca, married 6 years, said niddah provided “protection;” it gave her and her husband personal space without which her husband could feel rejected. Men, more so than women, initiate sex more frequently in different-sex relationships (Byers & Heinlein, 1989). Shira, married 21 years, explains:

The space allows us to connect with our bodies and spiritually connect, gives us that natural opportunity to step back and be your own person. You don't have to make excuses, and you can do your own thing without making anyone feel bad.

The space gives us time to be in touch with that natural need and not have to make excuses. It's built-in to the system.

There is a dearth of research investigating how relationship partners communicate sexual rejection and how to communicate this rejection while preserving closeness within the relationship (Muise, Kim, McNulty, & Impett, 2016). Since married couples rely almost exclusively on each other to fulfill sexual needs, the state of sexual rejection can be high among married couples (Kim, Horne, Muise, & Impett, 2019), and scholars have just begun exploring effects of sexual rejection in married and cohabiting relationships. However, consistent findings suggest individuals with high sexual communal strength are motivated to meet their partner's needs, and meeting their partner's needs positively impacts their satisfaction (Muise, Impett, Kogan, Desmarais, 2013). Participants in this study explain the "time off" from sex protects the relationship from having to communicate rejection, while also giving participants space to focus on themselves.

Dialectic of (Un)Certainty: Novelty-Predictability

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) explain that communication in close relationships involves chemistry among what is "given" (i.e., known) and what is "new" (p. 106). This tension was evident in the data when women spoke of experiencing unpredictability in their biological rhythms as well as their marriages.

Four participants specifically discussed the unpredictability of the menstrual cycle and uncertainties that could interfere with plans and schedules. Shira, married 21 years,

explained she would become frustrated when light spotting (menstrual blood) would appear during the 7 clean/preparatory days and extended her time in niddah. According to FP laws, when spotting occurs during the 7 clean days, the clock must be reset, and the 7 clean days must start anew. While this was “exasperating,” Shira added, “I know the anticipation of finally going to the mikveh and reconnecting is something very special.” Here, Shira explains that while her menstrual cycle can be unpredictable at times, she finds comfort in the predictability of connecting with her husband after the mikveh.

Rachel, married 6 years, echoed Shira’s sentiment and commented on the unpredictability of the menstrual cycle. She said her menstrual cycle can “happen suddenly when maybe we weren’t anticipating it, and we say, ‘Bummer!’” These two participants described the tension of unpredictability/predictability of their menstrual cycles while also navigating the clear (i.e., known and predictable) dictates of FP. Yael and Leah, married 12 and 17 years respectively, added that while the rules involved in keeping niddah are clearly defined, since there are so many, there can be many unknowns. This unpredictability can create anxiety due to the many moving details.

With overlap to the above tension addressing unpredictability, eight participants addressed predictability, expectations, and the ability to go into “niddah mode.” Being in “niddah mode” and communicating with their spouse about timing and the approximate end of niddah appeared to offset unpredictability of the menstrual cycle and make the tension easier to navigate. For example, while Rachel expressed the unpredictability of her menstrual cycle, she added that marking her timing of niddah on the calendar provided structure. Shiloh, married 1 year, echoed this sentiment:

Many things in Jewish life are routine, like the weekdays and Shabbat. Niddah and not in niddah. There's so much structure and flow that helps me regulate where I am emotionally. There's so little you can know and predict about life and having things that, no matter what—"this is what I do," "this is what happens"—it gives me a calming and structured feeling.

Participants also discussed communicating expectations with their spouse. For instance, Yael explained, "I'll tell him what day I'm going to the mikveh or, on the day, remind him I'm going today." Chava explained that when her husband asks "'how many days are left,' he wants to know exactly how many days are left [laughter]." Clearly discussing expectations with their spouse helped weave in certainty (and anticipation of reunion) during an uncertain period.

In summary, participants explained how the unpredictability of the menstrual cycle can interfere with expectations and how clearly communicating with their spouse helped add structure and certainty within the relationship. Finally, participants tended to rely on the predictability of reunion following the mikveh.

Dialectic of Expression: Openness-Closedness

Just over half of participants (60%) described how they kept their intimate lives private from people outside of their marriage. Sexual intimacy is a taboo topic for the participants, who favor concealing rather than revealing information about sexual intimacy. For example, Rebecca, married 6 years, describes intimacy as a private matter: "Usually you never tell people you're going to the mikveh. It's not something you share. Intimacy is a very private matter."

Those participants (40%) who described instances where they revealed information to people outside of their marriage did so because they had questions about protocol or needed to find a mikveh while traveling. Consider Rachel, married 6 years, who explained she put herself in a “really awkward situation” when traveling to Israel during niddah because she needed to find a mikveh. She had no choice but to reveal her niddah status by saying to female friend, “This is my mikveh night. Please help me make this happen.”

The majority (80%) expressed the inherent hardship of navigating niddah rules involving sexual and physical separation and what qualifies as sexually suggestive behaviors that must be avoided. Physical and sexual separation within a socially sanctioned sexual relationship (i.e., a marriage) not only highlighted the closedness tension women experienced with their husbands but also underscored how refraining from physical intimacy “might make the heart grow fonder” and enhance marital friendship and sexual desire.

In describing communication with her husband during niddah, Sarah explains:

It’s funny because, when you’re in niddah, you have to keep a certain amount of distance, because the point is that you’re not responding physically. You’re not trying to turn each other on, you know. But at the same time, you want to express that love for each other, and you still have that love for each other.

Shiloh explains that during niddah:

We try to stay away from very romantic things. We will go out to eat or have a game night or spend time doing activities or crafts that we don’t necessarily make time to do. We also make a point to study together when I’m in niddah.

As can be seen, participants expressed the push/pull of finding ways to be open while maintaining the mandated closedness. Often, closedness was described as an inability to use all communicative tools (e.g., touch). For instance, Elizabeth explained that if they have conflicts during niddah, she and her husband cannot “kiss and make up,” and they have to “work it out.” In addition, Shira explained her husband has a hard time comforting and consoling her without using physical touch. Shira described this as “challenging” and said being able to make someone feel better without touching them is an “art.” Shira said she and her husband are actively working on this issue.

While these tensions are subsumed under the dialectic of expression, there were themes of openness-closedness that pushed toward a unique aspect of this tension that specifically surrounded the sublimation of sexual intimacy and intensification of sexual desire. For the purpose of this and future studies, I labeled this the dialectic of restraint, and included a continuum of forces between Friend-Lover.

Dialectic of Restraint: Friend-Lover

During niddah, strict and ambiguous sexual and physical boundaries are placed between wife and husband. The dialectic of restraint might be unique to the FP population because of the institutional sanctions and personal interpretations of what is permitted and what is not during niddah. Importantly, sexual tension between friends is not a new phenomenon, and within different-sex friendships, the ambiguity of relationship roles can produce a sexual tension (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). In this sample of married FP women, ambiguity and interpretation of strict rules forbidding physical contact produced a sexual tension. The rules FP couples must follow

(re)introduce boundaries every month that are fruitful soil for the push and pull of friend and lover.

Rabbis instituted a number of rules to safeguard against physical intimacy during niddah, called *harchakot* (Guterman, 2008). These restrictions include, to name a few, drawing a bath for your spouse, eating off your spouse's plate, or sleeping in the same bed. These behaviors are forbidden because, in the rabbinic view, they are potentially laced with sexual suggestion and could lead to physical intimacy. While the rabbis delineated clear rules to safeguard against sexual intimacy and sexual behaviors during niddah, the present data suggests that “what counts” as sexually suggestive was not so clear. It appears that what might be sexually suggestive for one couple might not be true for another. This ambiguity of the boundaries between what is allowed and what is not presents a unique tension. For example, Shira explained:

Some couples play Scrabble during niddah. I know it sounds weird, but for another couple playing Scrabble, it could be harder for them because it could have sexual undertones. I think every couple needs to find their space—needs to find the activities that they can engage in but still keep it more friendly as opposed to allowing it to get out of hand.

The tensions generated by the external dialogue of *halacha* (Jewish law) and rabbinic sanctions surrounding niddah—in combination with personal experiences from the past, present, and hypothetical future scenarios that might imply sexual connotation and its avoidance—led to a fourth tension unique to this population. As the women in this study were in a socially sanctioned sexual union, the pull toward “lover” is always present. Complicating matters, however, for couples practicing FP, there are times that

“lover” must be subdued, and “friend” becomes central. As a result, themes within marital communication during niddah moved toward “friend.” Nevertheless, “lover,” though not central, was never absent.

When asked whether the communication with her husband changed during niddah, Shira, married 21 years, explained:

Obviously, you have to be more careful. As far as communicating verbally, you need to be careful not to talk about things that are going to create a super, charged connection. You have to keep it a little more neutral for sure.

Being “careful” to avoid communication that might create a “charged” connection demonstrates the interplay between openness and closedness (i.e., dialectic of expression) within the dialectic of restraint. Shira adds that what might invoke a sexually charged communication for some might be different for others, which again highlights the grey area of what behavior is forbidden during niddah. To illustrate this, Sarah says:

The laws say women shouldn’t wear perfume during niddah because it might arouse her husband. But it goes the other direction, too! I was just telling my husband he can’t wear cologne when I’m in niddah ‘cause I really like it. I really want him when he wears it.

Sarah, married 3 years, explained that she and her husband have to guard their communication to avoid physical intimacy:

We won’t talk about sexual plans necessarily because that’s just making us want each other. And that’s just not being fair. We say, “We can’t do this right now so shut up.” But we’ll definitely say things like “I’m so excited, I can’t wait, I miss you. Can’t wait to have you again.”

Chava, married 29 years, also explains that she and her husband often talk about sex. When I asked Chava if she and her husband talk about sex during niddah, she replied, “No. No. No. We try to NOT talk about it. It’s like talking about ice cream when you’re on a diet.” A recent meta-analysis reveals sexual communication (i.e., quality and frequency of sexual communication and sexual self-disclosure) has been positively linked to sexual desire, sexual arousal, lubrication, erectile function, less pain, and orgasm; effect sizes are larger among married participants (Mallory, Stanton, & Handy, 2019). It appears FP couples’ sexual communication has specific moments in time that might amplify sexual communication when it is allowed.

As can be seen, navigating grey areas of behavior during niddah and avoiding sexually charged intent enhanced the non-physical aspect of the marital relationship (i.e., friend). There was one case, however, where navigating the dialectic of restraint during niddah did not enhance closeness but created emotional distance. Leah, married 17 years, shared that she and her husband had a rule-breaking sexual breach during niddah, which made her cautious and cold during subsequent niddahs. Expressed in terms of RDT, Leah responded to the previous historical utterances. She reflected:

Because the breach happened so long ago, now I feel I can sit on the couch, look at my husband in his eyes, and verbally express that I wish I could hug him. But for the months after the breach, I would be so scared to say those things, and instead I would be very cold.

While Leah was the only participant to mention a sexual breach, it is reasonable that because of social desirability and safeguarding their intimate lives, other women practicing FP might have similar stories.

While the dialectic of restraint includes RDT's tensions of certainty, connection, and expression, the dialectic of restraint is unique in that FP women must navigate three distinct times over the course of their menstrual cycle: niddah, mikveh, and tehora. Strict halachic laws and the potential for ambiguous interpretation of those laws produces a tension between centralizing lover and sublimating friend and vice versa.

Maintenance During Niddah, the Mikveh Night, and Tehora

Relational maintenance from an RDT perspective addresses how people manage tensions in productive ways (Guerrero, Anderson, & Affifi, 2014). While there are many ways couples might maintain their marriage, participants described the following maintenance behaviors during niddah: sexual desire for their spouse, nurturing friendship, verbalizing closeness, and cognitive maintenance (i.e., thinking fondly of their spouse). Each is reviewed below.

Maintenance during niddah/ navigating the dialectic of restraint.

Sexual desire. Sexual desire represents a “want” and thus carries motivational force (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004); sexual desire was a motivating force to enable connection for a majority of participants during their time in niddah. Specifically, over half (60%) of participants described a longing to be with their husband during niddah. Since couples are forbidden from physical touch during niddah, sexual desire was always unconsummated, except for Leah who revealed “the temptation was stronger than the will to observe it [FP]. To avoid inciting too much desire, when participants were pulled toward the lover side of the spectrum, they reported they had to guard sexually suggestive behavior. This practice, they said, generated a stronger desire for their spouse while also intensifying friendship. For instance, Yael, married 12 years, explained that during

niddah, “We spend a lot more time talking, playing board games, going for walks. We definitely make a very concerted effort to spend time catching up and connecting emotionally.” When asked how these behaviors were different, if at all, when she was not in niddah, Yael said:

I think that we may still do some of the same behaviors, but they have a different feel since they’re also coupled with the physical. So even if we are talking, connecting, or playing a game together when I’m not in niddah, because there’s also the physical component there, it’s not like during niddah, which adds this mysterious kind of eroticism. When we’re touching, it doesn’t give us a chance to also nurture that longing and desire. In niddah, it really expands that drive, that, “oh, there’s something here that I’m not accessing right now.”

Elizabeth, married 8 years, put it simply: “When you can’t have something, you desire it more.” Elizabeth’s statement supports previous research that found married women lose sexual desire because sex is “over-available,” and there is no need to focus on sex when it is “always there” (Sims & Meana, 2010, p. 365).

In terms of RDT, participants curtailed sexual expression in responding to the already-spoken utterance of the distant past (i.e., biblical commandments) and the immediate past utterance (of being in niddah). In this way, their expressions in the utterance chain brought erotic mystique to the mundane and created a cyclical and periodic dynamism to the friend-lover dialectic.

Nurturing friendship. The second maintenance behavior during niddah, expressed by six of the ten participants, included nurturing friendship. Nurturing friendship was specific to when participants discussed being playful with their spouse,

taking the time to engage in intellectual conversations, or be together as friends. Rebecca, married 6 years, said that during niddah:

I think we laugh more. He becomes my friend and that's why I think I giggle more because we get to joke more. We have more time to expand on who we are. When you have that time and you can't be together, then you'll probably do something fun or laugh together and create that friendship.

Sarah, married 3 years, said:

During niddah, we're able to have discussions and connect intellectually. Just sitting down and hearing each other out. The last time we went on a date, we were in niddah, and we went to a nice hotel. We were walking outside, and I was thinking, "Normally we wouldn't really be talking so much because we're in such a nice romantic place together!" We were having a good discussion and getting to know each other a little better, because there's always more to learn even after 3 years. Hearing each other out on different topics. Because we're not able to touch, we were having these discussions that we wouldn't have necessarily had otherwise.

Participants explained that niddah enables them to nurture their friendship with their husbands by being playful and taking the time to engage in intellectual conversations. Interestingly, women's expressions of play and laughter were primarily present during our conversations specifically regarding niddah. Bakhtin (1981) explains:

Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open

its external shell, look into its center, doubt it take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. (p. 23)

Perhaps being free from the physical domain of the marital relationship enables freedom for the opportunity of open and more free play.

Verbalizing closeness. More than half of participants (60%) expressed the importance of being open about their feelings and expressing verbal signs of affection to their spouse during niddah. Elizabeth, married 8 years, described how she shows affection to her husband during niddah:

Well, you need to be more creative! [laughter] That's for sure. When you are not in niddah, it's really easy to show how you feel, and it's really easy just to give a hug. But in niddah, we have to find creative things or creative ways to express it.

Sarah, married 3 years, echoes Elizabeth:

We need to keep that emotional connection going [during niddah]. When you don't have the physical to do that, you're forced to do it in other ways. You're forced to talk and communicate a lot more openly than you would if you had physical touch available to you. So you're able to develop that emotional side.

Sarah recalled that during niddah, her husband brought her a coffee one morning. She said if she were not in niddah, she would have given him a hug or kiss to say "thank you." Since she could do neither of those things, she said to her husband, "Thank you so much. I wish I could give you a hug right now. You just made me so happy." Sarah mentioned that her husband has described her as more loving during niddah. The physical distance enables Sarah to perceive and relate to her husband in ways that he responds best and for the health of their marriage. Sarah's remarks seem similar to a process called

“self-regulation” which enables a person to tailor their behaviors across changing circumstances (Károlyi, 1993). Sarah added that she should include these more loving messages all the time and not just during niddah.

Rather than relying on physical touch, participants discussed the importance of explicitly communicating appreciation and affection during niddah. Thus, for these women, verbalizing closeness helped navigate distance engendered by niddah. The space generated from niddah also seems to enable space for wives to “self-regulate” and explore how to best express appreciation and affection during times when physical touch is forbidden.

Cognitive maintenance. The final maintenance behavior during niddah, expressed by 50% of participants, is labeled cognitive maintenance. This manifested in the current data when women discussed having the opportunity to step back and think of their marriage and their spouse in productive ways. This type of maintenance is common in long-distance relationships (Ellis & Ledbetter, 2015; Sahlstein, 2004), in which couples have the geographic space to reflect on their relationship. While many satisfied couples report reminiscent thinking (i.e., focusing on positive thoughts about the relationship), ruminations tend to be stronger when the couple are not in each other’s presence (Honeycutt, 2003). In the current study of co-resident spouses, cognitive maintenance was also evident. Although there was no geographic space, there was space nonetheless. Shira, married 21 years explained:

Niddah allows us to reflect a little bit. When you take that objective step backward, it enables you to see the picture better as far as “why do we actually like each other.” When you’re apart during niddah, you have the ability to take a

step back and appreciate why it is that you married—how you complement each other, getting back to how we got together in the first place.

Shira described how the space from her husband provided opportunity to reflect on similarities, shared goals, hopes and dreams, and affections. In her opinion, many people forget these attributes, but niddah created a reflective space where she considered, “What do I miss about him? What are the qualities about him that help me grow, both good and bad?”

Yael, married 12 years, explained that while the safeguards can feel “awkward,” they keep her mindful that she practices these laws only with her husband. She says the laws are:

Purposefully awkward that makes it feel like, “oh, there’s something here. There’s this intimacy here that I’m dancing around.” An intimacy because it’s purposeful. It reminds me and makes me think, “Right, I can’t do this because he’s that person to me, and we’re in this stage.”

Yael explained that the awkwardness makes it so the relationship with her husband during niddah does not become platonic. This is intriguing, because the very laws that safeguard against physical intimacy also ensure intimacy.

In summary, four maintenance behaviors emerged during niddah. These included sexual desire, nurturing friendship, verbalizing closeness, and cognitive maintenance. These behaviors suggest that closeness is enhanced through navigating the mandated distance engendered by niddah. Navigating the distance and space with their husbands redirected (and often simultaneously enhanced) sexual intimacy (i.e., lover) toward friend.

Maintenance behaviors: The mikveh night. Unique maintenance behaviors emerged during the transition from niddah to tehora (i.e., pure), which happens at the mikveh on a woman's mikveh night. The mikveh occurs after 7 clean days following the cessation of menstruation. As discussed above, the timeline can restart unexpectedly. The transition from niddah to tehora on the wife's mikveh night was predictable and radiated elements of certainty and anticipation.

Prioritizing “your day.” All 10 participants described how important it was to attend the mikveh after 7 clean days. Attending mikveh on “your day” was of utmost importance, even when it was inconvenient. Women navigated this demand by reminding themselves of the importance of attending the mikveh as a touchstone of their marriage. Sarah, married 3 years, explained:

Being in niddah is hard, and even if mikveh night comes and maybe it's inconvenient, I remind myself that “my marriage is the most important thing to me, and whatever comes in the way has to be pushed aside for that.” And so, I'll do whatever I can to help make sure that I'm going on that day 'cause I feel like I would really be insulting my marriage if I didn't.

Shira, married 21 years, echoed Sarah: “I have never postponed going [to the mikveh]. It would be disappointing for my husband. It would be disappointing for me.” Shira did add, however, that the only time she could ever imagine postponing her mikveh night would be for a once-in-a-lifetime event, like a sibling getting married that night. Leah, married 17 years, added that while she has never postponed her mikveh night, she also has never had a family *simcha* (Hebrew signifying joyous celebration) on the same night. She explains that if her mikveh fell on a sibling's wedding night or her son's *Bar Mitzvah*

(coming of age ceremony), it would be a “tough spot” to be in. Here, while all women insisted on the importance of going to mikveh after 7 clean days following menstruation, they also noted that they have never had an immediate family member having a significant lifetime event on the same day. Participants explained that if a friend were getting married on their mikveh night, for instance, they would go to the ceremony later or leave earlier.

Going to the mikveh precisely after 7 clean days was essential for all participants. Responding to the utterances of voices past held significance for all participants because it demonstrated continuity with the ancient traditions and carried forward their cultural and marital identity. Predominantly, attending the mikveh assured their husband that their marriage was the most important item on their agenda. Meta-analysis suggests assuring one’s partner of their commitment is strongly correlated and has large effect sizes for relationship satisfaction (Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013).

Me time. Six of the women described the mikveh as time to enjoy being alone. Participants described their alone time as a built-in framework to tend to herself with no distractions. Me time, therefore, was a consistent and reliable maintenance behavior that also enabled autonomy. Elizabeth, married 8 years, described:

Mikveh night is like a spa night, and I get to spend at least half an hour in the bathtub. And I never get to spend time in the bathtub! It’s relaxing....I mean cleaning everything isn’t actually relaxing, but I do feel it’s a time for myself.

Rebecca, married 6 years, said she likes to going to the mikveh because:

I enjoy the time it gives me. The whole physical preparation, making sure I’m completely clean, because to be able to go to the mikveh, you need to make sure

there's no objects interfering your body and the water. You have to make sure that you're shaved and that you have nothing on your eyes. You have to take off all your jewelry and make sure you clean your belly button. You have to really take time to check your whole body and make sure there's nothing interfering. And then a whole process of cleaning under your nails and, really focusing on that, taking off anything that you have on your body is beautiful. I think it's such a nice elevated system that allows women to feel like they're really taking care of themselves.

Rebecca added that taking care of herself is especially pertinent as the marriage endures and she had children. Inattention to self-grooming has also been found to influence why sexual desire for one's spouse fades (Sims & Meana, 2010). For participants, having time penciled in to attend to themselves enabled them to focus on their bodies.

Sarah, married 3 years, explained that before she had children she prepared for the mikveh at home, but after she had children she started doing all preparation at the mikveh. Sarah explains her choice to physically go to the mikveh after she had children because:

I really wanted that quiet. If was preparing for the mikveh at home, I would be doing a hundred other things at the same time, and I wouldn't be focusing on the preparation. Preparing at the mikveh gives me that little break with nobody on the phone, no laundry getting thrown in. And I think the quiet time sets you in that mindset of anticipation.

For Sarah, preparing at the mikveh gives her time to focus on herself and enables a hiatus from household tasks. Sarah also mentions that focusing on mikveh preparations, away

from home, enables anticipation to reunite with her husband. Previous research has found that married women tend to lose sexual desire because of role-incompatibility—role as a mom is not compatible with sexual role (Sims & Meana, 2010). Preparing at the mikveh seemed to provide Sarah boundaries to focus on herself and anticipate the physical and sexual domain of her marriage.

Mikveh as spiritually renewing. The mikveh night also enabled autonomy by providing space for participants to focus on spirituality, and many experienced the mikveh as a monthly spiritual renewal. Seventy percent of participants described the mikveh this way. Consider Yael, married 12 years:

I use the chance to not only cleanse my body physically but to really do an emotional and spiritual cleansing and checking in with myself. I find the experience of going to the mikveh to be really rejuvenating, really renewing. “Rejuvenate,” “renewal,” and “refreshed” were common words used to describe women’s experience at the mikveh. Here, discussions of prayer and God were laced with the experience of ritual.

Physical reconnection. The majority of participants (70%) specifically discussed the importance of physical reconnection with their spouse on mikveh night. In contrast to specifically avoiding behaviors laced with sexual innuendo during niddah (e.g., not pouring wine for each other or not wearing pretty underwear), the celebration in the lifting of these rules comes to the fore on mikveh night and sets the mood for physical intimacy.

Elizabeth, married 8 years, described mikveh night as “the best night ever! My husband will wear cologne, he’ll shave. It’s a date night.” Yael, married 12 years,

explained her husband often “sets the mood by pouring a glass of wine, lights a candle, and makes sure the dishes are clean ‘cause he knows I love a clean sink.” Chava, married 29 years, explains her husband brings her flowers, and they enjoy a special dinner on her mikveh night.

Rebecca, married 6 years, explains what usually happens when she comes home after the mikveh:

Before we had any children, it was very cute and romantic because my husband would be home with something special. One time he dressed up in his wedding suit. Another time he was waiting for me with candles and rose petals, and I would wear a nice dress and put on perfume.

And now it’s a little bit different because we have small children, but I try to come back with makeup, a nice smell, and different clothes. I’m also very excited and a little nervous, too. It’s been so long. When I come home, I say to my husband, “*Ani tehora*” [Hebrew, meaning, “I’m pure”]. And if the kids are asleep, he’ll probably approach me and hold my hand, hug me, and we’ll kiss for a while. If there’s things to be done, we’ll finish up whatever needs to be finished up, and then we’ll have relationships.

Similarly, Ava, married 8 years, described mikveh night as a “built-in window where you’re going to make it a priority to be together, rather than having someone say, ‘Oh, I’m too tired tonight.’” Similar to Rebecca’s husband, Chava’s husband also supports her by bringing her flowers or taking her out for dinner. Chava, married 29 years, says that when she comes home from the mikveh her husband is “very excited, and sometimes he brings me flowers or we go to a special dinner. We try to make it special.”

Most participants expressed the importance, predictability, and anticipation of being physically reconnected with their husbands on their mikveh night. Sexuality scholars have espoused the importance of anticipating sexual encounters to maintain a sexual bond within a marriage (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2015). Participants underscored the importance of sex on mikveh night and that they and their husbands set the mood by purposefully lifting the barriers prescribed during niddah to make their sexual relationship central. A recent review on sexual desire discrepancies emphasizes the common misconception that sexual desire pops up “out of the blue” (p. 7); rather, sexual desire is a response to a cue, and often includes flirting or seduction (Dewitte et al., 2020). It seems the FP couple actively creates a setting that cultivates sexual desire on mikveh night, motivating the couple’s reconnection.

Dialectical overlap. Consistent with RDT, maintenance behaviors on the mikveh night wove management of various tensions; space to attend to herself was also often accompanied by heightened anticipation to (re)connect physically with their husbands, and thus, tensions were not mutually exclusive but, rather, existed with other tensions. In addition, autonomy on the woman’s mikveh night were laced with tensions of predictability-unpredictability, expression, and desire. That is, while niddah is sometimes extended or shortened based on the menstrual cycle, niddah and going to the mikveh are predictable because it continues until menopause or during prescribed hiatus. And, paradoxically, the routine of niddah contributed to an on-off dynamic that fueled novelty during tehora.

Maintenance behaviors: Tehora. Upon the wife’s arrival home after the mikveh and before her next niddah approximately two weeks later, she is tehora, ritually “pure.”

Three distinct maintenance behaviors were described to navigate permitted sexual intimacy when tehora. Each behavior helped to manage the two-week period of permitted physical intimacy with their spouse. These maintenance behaviors included: Making the Most of It, Heightened Sensitivity, and Novelty.

Making the most of it. Seven women described that they prioritized being physically intimate when tehora. Rachel, when asked whether she thought there was any pressure to have sex when not in niddah, replied:

I get the feeling of “Well, time’s a-ticking. We should probably just do it now before we can’t.” But I don’t feel that it’s a bad thing. I think that sex in marriage is vital. And niddah makes everything a bit more exciting and like, “Yay! We’re back together.” So it’s a positive motivator to say, “I’m anticipating my period coming in X amount of time. Let’s make this happen.” I think that is helpful tool.

Shira explained:

When you’re able to be back together and be intimate, you’re excited, and you’re going to take advantage of that time. Now that I can sit in a car next to him, and he can take my hand, it’s nice. It’s an action that we take for granted all the time. But when you can’t do it for two weeks out of the month, you learn to appreciate those things a lot more.

The scarcity of available time for sex is a motivating factor for the majority of participants in my study. Since sex promotes and sustains attachment bonds between partners (Birnbaum, 2017), and the “afterglow” of sex and its effect on enhanced sexual satisfaction can last around two days (Meltzer et al. 2017), the scarcity of time can be a useful and motivating tool. Making the most of the time together when tehora allowed

women to appreciate the time they do have together with their spouse because they know it would not be for long.

Heightened sensitivity. Half of participants described a heightened sensitivity to otherwise ordinary behaviors that become eroticized when not in niddah. For example, since pouring wine for your spouse is not permitted during niddah, this otherwise ordinary behavior when *tehora* becomes meaningful and imbued with sexual possibility. Abstaining from otherwise mundane behaviors transformed them into erotic behaviors. For instance, Sarah explained:

The farther apart you go in niddah, the more the little touches really come to matter when not in niddah. So it's not just about sex. It's about your whole physical life together. And so just a squeeze of the hand means so much more than it would have otherwise. Just like having that special smell. Having that nice quiet dinner together where you're pouring a glass of wine for him or he's filling your plate up for you. Stopping that for two weeks, and when you have it back together, it makes it so much more special and so much more passionate.

Rachel, married 6 years, recalled how passing food at a table suddenly became significant:

I remember the first time that my husband and I were in niddah after we got married, and I was so weirded out. We were at a Shabbos [Shabbat] meal, and he was passing stuff to my female friend. And I was like, "What!?" I thought, "This is so bizarre." The situation reframed my understanding of what an intimate gesture that is.

These findings imply that mundane (perhaps taken-for-granted) behaviors can be transformed into erotic territory due to heightened sensitivity.

Novelty. The majority (80%) of participants described that the on/off dynamic of FP helped break up the monotony and give their marriage a refresh each month. While novelty can be conceptualized within the tension of certainty (i.e., push and pull of predictability and unpredictability), the on/off dynamic for participants encouraged excitement and enabled them to maintain excitement and encourage closeness during *tehora*.

Ironically, participants felt that not having routine separation made sex feel routine. Sarah, married 3 years, recalled being in *niddah* for the first time following the birth of their baby. She and her husband had not been under the restrictions of *niddah* for the 9 months of her pregnancy and postpartum until her menstrual cycle began again.

Sarah recalled:

Reuniting after that first *niddah* was like, “Wow, we haven’t had this in a while.”

I was able to see how having that long stretch of never being in *niddah* and having my husband available all the time, I definitely saw how things became a lot more routine. Having *niddah* really puts that refresher into your relationship on a consistent basis.

Sarah explains the availability of her husband can become familiar and routine, a common reason for declining sexual desire among women, called over-familiarity (Sims & Meana, 2010). For FP women, the lack of availability during *niddah* appears to buffer over-familiarity.

Shiloh, married 1 year, explains, “If sex is always available, then it’s not exciting or as interesting. And when there is a period of yes, no, yes, no, it’s really exciting.” Ava, married 8 years, agreed: “Giving yourself the two weeks on/two weeks off ensures you

maintain excitement in your intimate life.” Even though niddah was predictable and occurred with the onset of the menstrual cycle, participants discussed how niddah wove the maintenance of novelty every month.

Making the Most of It, Heightened Sensitivity, and Novelty helped women navigate their time being *tehora* and encouraged being physically close with their husbands during this time.

Discussion

The goals of study one were two-fold. The first was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of married Jewish women practicing FP. The second was to learn how tensions of closeness/distance, novelty/conventionality, openness/closedness, as described by relational dialectics theory (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), highlight marital maintenance behaviors for these women. Both objectives were met as I learned much about the intimate experiences of this understudied population and found, like in all marital relationships, tensions exist. Investigation also led to finding a new tension—the dialectic of restraint.

The manner by which FP women navigate these tensions may teach us much about marital sexual communication writ large and encourage more study in how couples can relate beyond the physical. The implications of these findings might be meaningful for married women who experience diminished sexual desire and loss of autonomy.

Rabbinical scholars have suggested FP provides a “monthly honeymoon” for married couples. Study one supports this idea. Previous research suggests that positive anticipation for sexual relations (i.e., having sex on the calendar) (McCarthy & Wald, 2015) and setting the mood for sexual intimacy (e.g., playing music, lighting candles) is

associated with greater sexual satisfaction in long-term relationships (Frederick, Lever, Gillespie, & Garcia, 2017). Participants in this study support this notion, as they described their mikveh night as both a space where they anticipated physical and sexual reunion as well as creating an environment for autonomy. In addition, participants described that mutual mood-setting behaviors heightened anticipation for reunion and symbolized the importance of their marriage. The behaviors practiced during niddah and leading up to the mikveh enabled closeness during tehora (ritually “pure” phase).

It was also found that unconsummated sexual desire during niddah, and its sublimation to verbal openness, enhanced play and laughter. I labeled this tension the dialectic of restraint, in which women navigated strict, but sometimes ambiguous, boundaries, and relied on past niddahs, cultural influence, and interactive pressures to interpret those boundaries. Consistent with RDT (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), the dialectic of restraint is multivocal with overlapping and interactive qualities with the other RDT tensions. Distinct prosocial maintenance behaviors during niddah were used to navigate the dialectic of restraint and included: sexual desire, nurturing friendship, verbalizing closeness, and cognitive maintenance.

In the dialectic of restraint, connection was not just physical but spanned emotional and cognitive dimensions, which, for these women, created a holistic relationship in marriage where “friend” and “lover” were honored. Past research suggests that women flirting with someone other than their husband but not crossing marital boundaries can enhance sexual desire for their spouse (Mullinax, Barnhart, Mark, & Herbenick, 2016). In this study, mundane activities between wife and husband often appeared flirtatious and, like boundaries between friends, had to be honored. In this

fashion, the subordination of sexual intention instilled mundane interactions with erotic and mysterious flavor. This is not dissimilar to the enhanced sexual desire by engaging in extra-marital flirtatious behavior; here, however, the flirtation remained in the marriage. During niddah, husband and wife had the proverbial “elephant in the room” that can make everyday behaviors become erotic. It appears that, for a majority of participants, covering up sexual intimacy amplified its desire.

In addition, FP wives experienced autonomy during niddah. Specifically, during niddah, they did not worry about rejecting their husbands’ desire for sex. Past research has found that sexual rejection occurs around once per week (Byers & Heinlein, 1989). Perhaps the two weeks “off” from marital sex influences the larger conversation of sexual frequency expectations. Regarding autonomy, participants also relied on the predictability of her mikveh night to attend to her body without family distraction, which for some women also increased positive anticipation for physical reconnection. Autonomy has been linked to the maintenance of sexual desire in long term relationships (Ferreria et al., 2014). Ironically, participants in this study reported that when they were not required to follow a two-week-on, two-week-off pattern of sexual intimacy (e.g., during pregnancy when there was an interruption in their menstrual cycle), they felt that sex itself became routine. For these women, absence did make the heart grow fonder.

Overall, based on my review of the literature, study one provided the first exploration within the communication discipline to learn about this understudied marital practice. Distinct prosocial maintenance behaviors were used to manage RDT tensions. Learning more about these behaviors might serve the literature on marital maintenance and ways to navigate inevitable marital tensions, as all couples eventually face some sort

of sexual incompatibility (Impett & Peplau, 2003). Finally, a novel dialectic, the dialectic of restraint, was evident where wives navigated sometimes ambiguous rabbinic dictates.

Study two, in complement to study one, assesses meaningful differences between FP couples and Jewish non-FP couples on marital health and will be discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY TWO: SELF-EXPANSION THEORY

Study one applied relational dialectics theory (RDT; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) for a qualitative investigation into the phenomenon of family purity (FP). Self-expansion theory (SET; Aron & Aron, 1986) forms the framework for the quantitative investigation in study two. SET was developed through a need to conceptualize a more holistic understanding of closeness, one that emphasizes aspects of interconnectedness with affective and cognitive elements (Aron & Aron, 1986). Captured by Rebecca from study one of this dissertation, mandated sexual abstinence provides space in the relationship to “have more time to expand on who we are.” There are two underlining principles of SET: 1) motivational principle and 2) inclusion-of-the-other-in-the-self principle. People experience self-expansion through inclusions of self in others and through engaging in novel and exciting (i.e., self-expanding) activities.

Motivational Principle

In the early stages of a romance, partners tend to be motivated to incorporate their partner’s resources in order to optimize their own potential. Falling in love and learning new things about one’s partner is exciting and motivates a person to incorporate their partner’s cognitive framework as their own. When a person falls in love, self-expansion and the desire for closeness reaches its apex. Aron and Aron (1986) describe motivation as an iterative process including expansion and integration. Expansion includes excitement, stimulation, and novelty. Integration involves incorporating these experiences into one’s own existing cognitive framework. The expansion process requires renewal, and a person again seeks novelty and stimulation. According to Aron

and Aron (1986), with each integration of their partner's attributes, the person expands their cognitive framework. While falling in love is a major motivator in reigniting the ongoing process of motivation, it is important to maintain motivation to continue the iterative self-expansion process (Aron & Aron, 1986). SET (Aron & Aron, 1986) espouses that maintaining novelty in the relationship is crucial to sustaining expansion.

When a person loses motivation and when self-expansion reaches a point of stasis, a person becomes bored in their relationship, and it can appear as though opportunities for self-expansion decline. As a result, a person may look for opportunities outside of the partnership to fulfill growth (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006), such as engaging in flirtatious behavior with a crush but not crossing relationship boundaries, which can be a source of expansion and fuel desire for one's spouse (Mullinax, Barnhart, Mark, & Herbenick, 2016). Findings from study one suggest that the mandated distance engendered by FP creates space to redefine what can be considered flirtatious behavior within the marriage and perhaps create opportunities for growth.

Similarly, spending time together is a commonly reported maintenance strategy for married couples (Baxter & Dindia, 1990). Maintenance from a self-expansion lens would encourage married couples to engage in activities that lead to self-expansion; there would be less expansion benefit when couples engage in activities together that are not self-expanding in nature. Various experiments suggest engaging in exciting activities report increases in satisfaction compared to couples engaging in pleasant but less stimulating activities (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000; Lewandowski & Aron, 2004; Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993).

Research on self-expansion suggests couples can increase opportunities for self-expansion within the relationship by participating in novel, exciting, and challenging activities together (Aron et al., 2000; Reissman et al., 1993). Some activities might include hiking a new trail, solving a new puzzle, or navigating an obstacle course together. Indeed, these examples take energy, creativity, and perseverance, and research shows couples tend to be unmotivated to expend this type of energy and instead fall back upon less novel activities (Harasymchuk et al., 2017) like watching a familiar television show and cooking dinner. Familiar activities, while tried and true, do not allow opportunities for mutual self-expansion within the relationship. Engaging in new and challenging activities together enhances the couple's ability to expand their cognitive framework and, thus, have more resources to share. Perhaps the mandated distance generated by an FP between wife and husband can be considered a challenging activity that a couple can do together that do not require a hiking trail or added financial expense.

In order to potentiate the growth within a marriage, autonomy is important to maintain motivation for self-expanding opportunities. Rachel, a participant from study one, explains that going on dates with her husband during niddah enables them to talk about things they would not necessarily talk about and “get to know each other a little better.” Overall, findings from study one found that FP married women reported the space from niddah provided monthly experiences of newness and excitement while also enabling autonomy for the wife. Since SET espouses that the longer a relationship the more prone to boredom, this study tests whether FP influences relationship self-expansion and mitigates boredom. I ask the first two research questions for study two:

RQ1: Are there differences in self-expansion scores between practicing FP and non-FP husband and wife groups?

RQ2: How are boredom and marital length for husbands and wives associated with the practice of family purity compared to husbands and wives not practicing FP?

According to the model of self-expansion, the more a person is motivated to enhance self-expansion, the more a person desires to include others in their self-concept (Aron, Lewandowski, Mashek, & Aron, 2013).

Inclusion-of-Other-in-the-Self Principle

In addition to the basic human motivation to expand one's sense of self, people look to close intimate relationships to expand their self. Here, our cognitive construction of the other, in this case one's spouse, overlaps with the self. Thus, to the extent that a person overlaps their spouse's self with their own, the person takes on their spouse's recalled memories, identities, resources, and perspectives. Partners inform opinions and shape how we see the world. Inclusion of the other in the self is a communal principle, in that a person acts for the benefit of the other because their benefit directly impacts themselves. That is, a person's self is largely influenced by their spouse.

Interpersonal closeness, interpreted through SET, is construed as overlapping selves, and the inclusion of one's partner in one's own self-concept (e.g., identities, past experiences, education) produces beneficial outcomes personally and relationally (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). To the extent that a person incorporates his or her partner's attributes and possessions, the couple shares outcomes, influences each other's goals, merges their sense of self, and influences the ways they independently and together see

the world (Aron et al., 2013). This cognitive integration helps explain Aron and Aron's (1986) measure of closeness, called the inclusion-of-the-other-in-self (IOS). The IOS scale is a graphic measure of relational closeness where each succeeding graphic representation depicts greater integration (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Aron et al., 1992).

Within the framework of SET, identities, resources, and qualities of each partner become shared. This can lead to cognitive confusion wherein each partner forgets which traits or possessions are their own (Sheets, 2014). For example, when recalling a past event, a person might not remember if they or their partner were the subject of the story. Similarly, one might forget which possessions belonged to whom. Indeed, it is important to find an optimal balance between closeness and autonomy because "otherness" is greatly important for the sexual relationship, an important part of marriage (Ferreira et al., 2014). SET underscores the importance of novelty to maintain expansion, as well as protecting and growing one's unique self. Relationship distance in the form of mandated abstinence from psychical touch and physical intimacy might offer a way to introduce novelty and protect one's autonomy.

In addition to relationship closeness, research has addressed the importance of partnership distance, wherein some degree of distance is conceptualized as a prosocial maintenance process rather than a disturbance (Ben-Ari, 2012). If a partner perceives a balance between closeness and distance, there should be little discrepancy between the current perception of closeness and their idealized closeness. The idea of a balance between actual and ideal closeness is rooted in self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985). When a person perceives their closeness does not match their ideal

state, the discrepancy can create dissatisfaction. In general, the greater the discrepancy, in any direction, the greater the dissatisfaction (Higgins, 1987; Ruvolo & Veroff, 1997).

In the context of personal relationships, to the extent that a person perceives their partner as meeting their ideal state, it is more likely the relationship will endure, and the person will enjoy a satisfactory relationship (Buyukan-Tetik, Campbell, Finkenauer, Karremans, & Kappen, 2017; Meltzer, McNulty, Jackson, Karney, 2014). To measure closeness discrepancy, ideal closeness is subtracted from perceived actual closeness (Aron, Mashek, & Aron, 2004; Mashek & Sherman, 2004). The smaller the discrepancy, presumably the greater the satisfaction and the more optimal the IOS.

Research Questions

Closeness

Research has also suggested that the closeness discrepancy (i.e., the difference between idealized closeness and perceived closeness) produces higher predictive value of satisfaction than actual IOS scores alone (Frost & Forrester, 2013). Frost and Forrester (2013) suggest that when one partner's idealized expectations are not actualized and there is imbalance of closeness and distance within the relationship, dissatisfaction can ensue. Since findings from study one reported the space engendered by niddah was helpful for women in feeling a sense of autonomy, study two explores whether there are meaningful differences between FP and non-FP husbands and wives regarding closeness, ideal closeness, and closeness discrepancies.

RQ3: Are there differences in closeness, ideal closeness, and closeness discrepancies based on whether the couple practices family purity?

RQ4: Do closeness discrepancies between FP and non-FP couples relate to marital and sexual satisfaction?

Sexual Closeness

More recent studies have expanded the IOS closeness measure to measure sexual closeness (Frost, McClelland, & Dettman, 2017; Muise, Kim et al., 2016). Sexual closeness can be defined as the degree to which a person imagines the interconnectedness between themselves and their relationship partner and a combination of affective, physical, and cognitive elements. As with the IOS closeness discrepancy, greater sexual closeness discrepancies are negatively associated with relationship health variables, such as sexual satisfaction (Frost et al., 2017). Sexual closeness discrepancies are calculated in the same way as IOS closeness discrepancies, wherein the desired sexual closeness is subtracted from perceived actual sexual closeness scores (Frost et al., 2017). Frost and colleagues (2017) reported sexual closeness discrepancies are robust predictors of sexual satisfaction. Similar to the IOS discrepancy discussed above as a predictor of relationship health, smaller sexual discrepancy is associated with greater sexual well-being, especially in the long-term. That is, people who experience exacerbation of sexual closeness discrepancies over time were associated with decreases in sexual satisfaction. Of course, sexual closeness discrepancies involve partner negotiation and communication.

There is a growing body of literature suggesting partners often have different sexual needs and desires (Balzarini, Muise, Dobson, Kohut, Raposo, & Campbell, 2019). One of the primary disagreements reported by newlyweds concerns when and how often to engage in sex (Risch, Riley, & Lawler, 2003). Findings from study one suggest that the approximate two weeks “off” from sex made wives practicing FP look forward to

engaging in sex with their husbands and also use the time they were *tehora* as a motivator to have sex. Thus, study two aims to explore whether the dyadic distance engendered by FP affects sexual closeness discrepancies. Formally asked:

RQ5: Are there differences in sexual closeness, ideal sexual closeness, and sexual closeness discrepancies based on whether the couple practices family purity?

RQ6: How do sexual closeness scores relate to sexual and marital satisfaction and how do they differ by FP and non-FP groups?

RQ7: Are there differences in sexual satisfaction for husbands and wives practicing FP compared to husbands and wives not practicing FP?

In addition, research finds that husbands' unmet sexual needs negatively impact his communication with his wife (Willoughby, Farero, & Busby, 2014). This current study aims to explore whether sexual closeness discrepancies are associated with marital maintenance strategies and whether practicing FP makes a difference in maintenance use. As women reported in study one of this project, *niddah* encouraged couples to nurture different facets of their relationship, engage in intellectual talk, play and laugh together, and verbally express love. Therefore, perhaps the space engendered by *niddah* encourages use of maintenance behaviors.

Since participants in study one discussed the importance of verbalizing closeness when physical touch is disallowed, study two will explore whether practicing FP affects husband and wife reports of maintenance behaviors in general. In addition, since literature suggests unmet sexual ideals can affect relationship functioning for husbands (Willoughby et al., 2014), this project also explores whether sexual closeness discrepancies are associated with husband and wife reports of maintenance behaviors.

RQ8: Are there differences in reports of maintenance behaviors between FP and non-FP husband and wife groups?

RQ9: How are sexual closeness discrepancies associated with maintenance behaviors for husbands and wives practicing FP and husbands and wives not practicing FP?

Sexual Desire

In addition to sexual closeness discrepancies, sexual desire is an important aspect of marital sexual health and maintenance (Birnbaum, 2018; Mark, 2012). Sexual desire can be defined as a “motivation to seek out, initiate, or respond to sexual stimulation or the pleasurable anticipation of such activities in the future” (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004, p. 199).

Sex and relationship expert Esther Perel (2006) explains that many people believe they spontaneously felt sexual desire in the beginning of their relationship and lament that spontaneity wanes as the relationship progresses. Perel (2006), however, describes that spontaneous desire in the beginning of the relationship is far from “spontaneous” and that many forces are at work to perpetuate the illusion of spontaneity. Such factors that are far from spontaneous might include thinking about the clothes one might wear on a date, the music they might play, and the wine they will choose for dinner. Thus, these combined forces create anticipation, fuel sexual desire, and get mistaken for spontaneity. These “foreplay” maneuvers involve creativity, calculation, and effort and are anything but spontaneous. Due to the lack of ongoing effort, it is no wonder the loss of sexual desire in marriage is common (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; McCarthy & McCarthy,

2015) and a major reason couples seek therapy (Ellison, 2002). Use of consistent maintenance tools to boost sexual desire in the marriage are needed.

It also may prove productive to specifically explore ways to sustain wives' sexual desire, because husbands tend to want sex more than wives (Baumeister, Catanese, & Vohs, 2001; Frost & Donovan, 2015). Wives also tend to be less distressed than husbands with less frequent sex (McNulty & Fisher, 2008; Willoughby et al., 2014). Finding maintenance tools that may help increase wives' sexual appetites might help to mitigate this area of tension within a marriage.

Sims and Meana (2010) report that married women with hypoactive sexual desire disorder felt remorseful that they were unable to satisfy their husbands' sexual appetite. This created worry for the wives that their husbands might seek pleasure outside of the marriage (Sims & Meana, 2010). Participants also noted that a change of partner or lifestyle might renew their sexual desire (Sims & Meana, 2010). In this scenario, rather than look toward their husband, women describe looking outside of the marriage to renew their sexual appetite. Sims and Meana suggest (2010) "introducing healthy distance and individuation" as a way to boost wives' sexual desire within the marriage (p. 377). This dissertation explores whether abstaining from touch and affection for two weeks (i.e., niddah) provides this "healthy distance," affects sexual desire, and reduces boredom for wives.

RQ10: Are there differences in cues for sexual desire based on whether the wife practices family purity?

In summary, SET and the IOS scale provide a theoretical framework and reliable measures for a quantitative investigation of FP and marital health outcomes, including

satisfaction, maintenance, boredom, and sexual desire. The framework of SET helps organize the complex interplay between closeness and distance within a marriage. While rabbinic scholarship espouses separation as integral to positive marital outcomes and the practice has endured for millennium, FP couples compared to Jewish non-practicing FP couples has not been empirically tested. Study two aligns with this dissertation's aim is to start a dialogue about whether regular distancing can contribute to happier and enduring marriages by exploring empirical relationships among extant relational variables in both FP and non-FP couples.

Methods

Quantitative Study Procedures

A cross-sectional, dyadic (husband and wife pairs) survey methodology was used to test the research questions comparing responses between practicing FP couples and non-practicing FP couples. The university Institutional Review Board approved the quantitative procedures in May 2018. Data collection began in early June 2018 and concluded late July 2018. Qualtrics, an online survey software, was used to collect responses from participants. Since I was not directly speaking to the couples and information was collected via an online survey, the gatekeeper from study one permitted that husbands could be included in study two to allow examination of study two research questions.

Collecting data from husband and wife pairs allowed for the investigation of differences between couples and within couples for research questions specifically addressing within and between couple differences. Since husband and wife mutually influence each other in many aspects of the relationship and especially the sexual

relationship (Fisher, Donahue, Heiman, Rosen, & Sand, 2015), gathering data from both partners has become increasingly common in an effort to explain more variance in a person's relational outcomes (Guerrero, 2014).

The following sections outline recruitment procedures and participant demographics for study two. The measures selected for this quantitative study are discussed, along with reports of their internal consistency. Finally, the analytical procedures are described.

Recruitment. A nonrandom convenience sample was used to design the sampling frame. Potential participants included FP-practicing and non-FP Jewish couples. Participants were recruited via Jewish Facebook groups (e.g., Jewish Women Talk About Anything, Jewish Women *Actually* Talk about Anything, Arizona Jewish Moms). In addition, Jewish synagogues in the southwest United States disseminated recruitment materials to their electronic mailing lists. Participants from study one were also asked to disseminate recruitment materials to their networks; however, study one participants were asked not to take the quantitative survey. The gatekeeper from the qualitative study, study one, also distributed recruitment materials to her network. Participants were compensated with a five-dollar (\$5) gift certificate to a popular online retailer upon completion of the survey.

To be included in the quantitative study, participants had to meet the following criteria: both partners identify as Jewish, live full-time with their spouse, were at least 18 years old, read and understand English, and the wife must be pre-menopausal. It was important for women to be premenopausal as this study was exploring effects of niddah (i.e., the ritually unclean time during menstruation) on the marriage.

Participants. A total of 433 respondents completed the survey, but 243 were eliminated due to lack of partner response. Of the remaining 190 individual responses, all 95 married couples were successfully matched. In order to ensure a marital match, participants identified their birthdate, spouse's birthdate, date of their wedding, the city where they lived, and the number of children they had. These demographic questions preceded the survey and required responses before continuing. There were no instances where a dyadic match was in question.

Of the 95 couples who were matched, two couples were eliminated because of substantial missing data (i.e., completed less than 20 percent of the survey), two couples were eliminated because the husband and wife did not agree on the observance of family purity (FP), and one couple was deleted because the wife indicated she was menopausal. The final sample included 90 married couples ($N = 180$, $n = 90$ women; $n = 90$ men). From this final sample, 24 couples were classified in the non-FP group, and 66 couples were placed in the FP group.

Survey Measures

To ensure survey items were pertinent to the practice of FP, participants from the qualitative study were sent the survey questions via email and were asked to confirm their readability surrounding behaviors during niddah. The participants of the qualitative study were informed they were not eligible to take the survey. Participants of study one informed me that the questions regarding behaviors during niddah were clear.

Demographics. A series of demographic questions were included in the beginning of the survey. These questions included age, sex, ethnicity, marital length, education, number of children, and whether the wife was pregnant, nursing, or in

menopause. All participants were asked, “Do you identify as Jewish?” Participants responded “yes” or “no” to this question. Because eligibility criteria required all participants to be Jewish, this question allowed proper screening of participants.

Family purity group. To distinguish between FP and non-FP groups, participants were asked, “Do you and your spouse practice family purity / Taharat HaMishpacha?” Participants responded either “yes” or “no.” As practicing FP was the distinguishing factor between couple groups, for a married couple to be placed in either group, both husband and wife were required to check the same response. If their answers did not correspond, they were excluded from the subject pool.

“Lenient” and “strict” behaviors. Modeling Guterman’s (2008) survey, four items were assessed as “lenient” behaviors that couples might avoid during menstruation and the week following, and 12 items were assessed as “strict” behaviors that they must avoid according to niddah laws. Lenient (*harachot*) items included: passing items to each other, sleeping in joined (not separated) beds, sitting on the same cushion on the couch, and tapping each other on the shoulder. The “strict” (actual niddah) items are comprised of 12 behaviors: holding hands in private, holding hands in public, kissing not on lips, kissing on lips without tongue, kissing passionately (with tongue), heavy petting (rubbing/squeezing), orgasm-directed caresses for the man (hand-job), orgasm-directed caresses for the woman (fingering), oral sex for the man (fellatio), oral sex for the woman (cunnilingus), anal intercourse, and vaginal intercourse. In order to differentiate behaviors during menstruation and the week following menstruation, participants were given the same list of both lenient and strict behaviors: 1) during menstruation and 2) the week following menstruation. To assess behaviors during menstruation, the survey

prompted answers to the following question: “Some couples refrain from certain behaviors during the wife’s menstrual period. Please check which behaviors you REFRAIN from doing with your spouse during your menstrual period.” To assess behaviors in the week following menstruation, the survey prompted answers to the following question: “Some couples refrain from certain behaviors for the week AFTER the wife’s menstrual period. Please indicate which behaviors you REFRAIN from doing with your spouse for one week AFTER the wife’s menstrual period has ended.” Participants were prompted to check each behavior they refrained from during that specific time.

The scale in this sample reported excellent reliability for all time periods and roles (i.e., husband/wife), except for non-FP husbands regarding strict sexual behaviors one week following the wife’s menstrual period. Table 1 lists the Cronbach alphas for this sample.

Table 1

Reliability Coefficients for Sexual and Non-Sexual Behaviors During Wife's Menstruation and One Week Following Menstruation

Chronbach's Alpha Lenient and Strict Behaviors		
Wives	Lenient	Strict
FP During	.87	.90
FP After	.87	.90
Non-FP During	1	.89
Non-FP After	1	.89
Husbands		
FP During	.88	.89
FP After	.89	.90
Non-FP During	1	.75
Non-FP After	1	.31*

Note: *Non-FP husbands reported very few instances of refrained behavior for week two (i.e., one week following wife's menstrual period). Nine non-FP husbands reported a refrained behavior; the average refrained behavior was 1.33.

Sexual satisfaction. Sexual satisfaction was assessed using a subscale of the extended satisfaction with life scale (ESWLS) (Alfonso, Allison, Rader, and Gorman, 1996). The ESWLS assesses satisfaction among different facets of life, including family, school, social, relationships, and more. The sexual satisfaction subscale was a 5-item assessment measured on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) scale. An example question includes: "In most ways my sex life is close to my ideal."

Consistent with previous research (Frost et al., 2017), the scale in this sample demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .96$).

Self-expansion. A 5-item self-expansion scale was used (Mitchell, Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2013). Participants used a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree) to rate items including: “I have exciting experiences with my spouse,” “My marriage allows me to see the world in new ways.” For this sample, this scale demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of $\alpha = .88$

Closeness and closeness discrepancies (IOS). Modeling Frost, McClelland, and Dettmann (2017), closeness discrepancies were assessed using the IOS developed by Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992). The scale presented participants with a series of seven pictures of two circles, one for self and one for their partner, that showed various levels of integration and ranged from complete separation to near overlapping. Each picture in the series was assigned a number from 1 to 7, and participants were asked to choose the picture that best described the actual closeness in their marriage and the ideal level of closeness (Aron et al., 1992). Modeling Frost and colleagues (2017), relationship closeness discrepancies were determined by subtracting a participant’s “ideal” IOS from his/her actual IOS. The IOS validity and reliability have been empirically established with robust correlations with other multi-item scales measuring relationship closeness, such as the subjective closeness index and the relationship closeness inventory (Aron et al., 1992).

Sexual closeness and sexual closeness discrepancies (sexual IOS). Following Frost and colleagues (2017), sexual closeness discrepancies were assessed in the same way as closeness discrepancies, described above, by adding “sexual closeness” to the

series of IOS pictures. Modeling Frost and colleagues (2017), sexual closeness discrepancies were determined by subtracting a participant's "ideal" sexual IOS from his/her actual sexual IOS.

Relationship boredom. The relational boredom scale (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012) was used to assess relationship boredom. Participants responded to 15 items that assessed relational boredom by stating how well each item characterized their relationship on a scale of 1 (not true at all) to 7 (completely true). A sample item includes: "I'm sick and tired of my partner." Consistent with previous research (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012), the scale in the current sample demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .95$).

Cues for sexual desire. The cues for sexual desire scale (CSDS; McCall & Meston, 2006) assessed participant's perceptions of their partner's sexual advances. The CSDS assessed four different cues that would likely make a partner sexually desire their spouse. This study used three of the four cues, including emotional bonding cues, erotic/explicit cues, and implicit/romantic cues. Items were slightly reworded so they referred to the spouse specifically. Rated on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all likely; 5 = extremely likely), the questions included 10 items to assess emotional/bonding cues (e.g., feeling a sense of love for your spouse), 8 items to assess erotic/explicit cues (e.g., talking about sexual activity with your spouse), and 10 items to assess implicit/romantic cues (e.g., giving or receiving a massage from your spouse). In prior research (McCall & Meston, 2006), Cronbach's alpha for emotional bonding cues were $\alpha = .92$, erotic/explicit were $\alpha = .87$, and romantic/implicit cues were $\alpha = .88$. For this sample, emotional

bonding cues demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .89$, erotic-explicit cues were adequate $\alpha = .81$, and romantic/implicit cues were good $\alpha = .84$.

Frequency of penile-vaginal intercourse. Participants were asked to rate the frequency of penile-vaginal sexual intercourse per month with one item that included options from 1 to 30 or more in increments of 4 (e.g., 1–4, 5–8, 9–12, etc.) (Hernandez, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2011).¹

Marital satisfaction. Norton's (1983) quality of marriage index (QMI) assessed marital satisfaction. The QMI (Norton, 1983) is a more reliable measure for longer, more stable relationships (i.e., marriages) than for shorter, less stable relationships (Graham, Diebels, & Barnow, 2011). The QMI is a 6-item measure of global satisfaction.

Participants responded to 5 items on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree), including items like "Our marriage is strong." One global item—"The degree of happiness, everything considered, in your marriage"—was measured on a 10-point scale. Consistent with previous research (Dainton, 2015), the scale in this sample demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .95$).

Relational maintenance. Canary and Stafford's (1992) maintenance strategies scale measured three out of the five maintenance behaviors assessed in this dissertation. Participants were instructed to respond to the prompt: "The following items concern things people might do to maintain their relationships. Please indicate the extent to which you do the following behaviors in your marriage." All maintenance behavior items were rated on a 5-point frequency scale (1 = never; 5 = always). The maintenance behavior

¹ This measure was not used in research questions and only reported as descriptive since it failed to offer zero as an option.

positivity was assessed using 10 items and included items such as “I attempt to make our interactions enjoyable.” Openness was assessed using six items, including “I disclose what I want or need from my relationship.” Assurances was assessed using four items and included items like “I imply that our relationship has a future.”

To assess verbal and physical affection maintenance behaviors, this study employed Ledbetter’s (2013) maintenance strategies scale. Verbal affection was assessed using five items and included prompts like “I say ‘I love you’ to my spouse.” Physical affection was assessed using five items and included: “We kiss each other.” For the sample in the current study, positivity demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of $\alpha = .87$, openness demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of $\alpha = .84$, assurances demonstrated less than adequate internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of $\alpha = .70$, verbal affection demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of $\alpha = .86$, and physical affection demonstrated very good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of $\alpha = .92$.

Differences and correlations in the above measures are reported in the Appendix.

Data Analysis

The data was organized by pairing the record of responses for each couple. This data organization is variably called a “pairwise” or “double entry” structure (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Thus, in this study of married couples, the wife’s data is recorded as one set of variables (i.e., Wife Marital Satisfaction), and her husband’s responses in this variable are titled as Husband Marital Satisfaction. Organizing the data in this way allowed probing within and between couple differences specific for specific research questions.

All analyses were conducted on IBM SPSS Version 25. I assessed the actual behaviors as reported by husband and wife on their report of sexual and non-sexual behaviors they refrain from during the wife's menstrual period and one week following the wife's menstrual period. I then assessed the proportion of agreement between husband and wife and their reports of refraining from sexual and non-sexual behaviors during menstruation and one week following menstruation. I then did a descriptive analysis of penile-vaginal intercourse frequency per month. I looked at these proportions across FP and non-FP groups. FP and non-FP husbands and wives on general relationship closeness and sexual closeness scores were assessed by mean differences. Paired t-test procedures explored how husbands and wives within the FP and non-FP groups reported on research questions' specific qualities. Levine's test was examined to determine the appropriate version of the t-test. Correlation analysis was assessed on husband and wife marital and sexual satisfaction variables as related to closeness. I did a regression analysis that looked at the baseline of sexual closeness and sexual closeness discrepancy within each spouse for FP and non-FP group to predict the five maintenance behaviors. Finally, I did a repeated measures ANOVA analysis to assess differences between couples and within couples on boredom and marriage length. I also performed a repeated measures ANOVA to assess between couple differences on self-expansion. I did a residual analysis for each regression analysis to assess normality and homogeneity of variance. All assessments appeared reasonable.

A significance level of .05 was chosen for all analyses. In addition, effect size using Cohen's *d* was reported with each outcome. Finally, due to the number of tests in study two, a sequenced Bonferroni is included with all tests.

Findings

Preliminary Analyses

Participant characteristics. Marital length ranged from one half year to 33 years of marriage ($M = 6.44$; $SD = 6.14$). Women's ages ranged from 20 to 53 years ($M = 29.27$; $SD = 5.92$), and men's ages ranged from 22 to 57 years ($M = 31.14$; $SD = 6.57$).

Of the 90 men in this sample, 84.4% identified as White/Caucasian, 6.7% identified as White/Caucasian/Middle Eastern, 5.5% identified as Other, 2.2% identified as Middle Eastern, and 1.1% identified as Black/African American. The men who selected "other" identified as: Jewish ($N = 2$), Ashkenazi Jewish ($N = 1$), European ($N = 1$), Jewish/Latino ($N = 1$), and White Israeli ($N = 1$). Of the 90 women, 85.6% identified as White/Caucasian, 4.4% as Other, 2.2% as Middle Eastern, 2.2% as Middle Eastern/Other, 1.1% as White/Caucasian/Middle Eastern, Asian, and 1.1% as White/Caucasian/Native American/Alaska Native. The women who selected Other identified as: Ashkenazi Jewish ($N = 1$), British White ($N = 1$), Jewish ($N = 1$), Latina ($N = 1$), Mexican ($N = 1$), and Russian ($N = 1$).

Seventy-four (82.2%) couples lived in the United States, seven (7.7%) lived in Canada, six (6.6%) lived in Israel, two (2.2%) lived in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and one couple (1.1%) lived in South Africa.

Participants indicated their household annual income in US dollars as follows: five couples (5.6%) earned 0–\$25,000, 13 couples (14.4%) \$25,001–\$50,000, 10 couples (11.1%) \$50,001–\$75,000, 10 couples (11.1%) \$75,001–\$100,000, 19 couples (21.1%) \$100,001–\$125,000, 3 couples (3.3%) \$125,001–\$150,000, and 21 couples (23.3%) over \$150,000. Of those living outside of the US who reported their income in a non-US dollar

amount, eight couples indicated their annual household income to approximately \$200,000 USD, \$65,000 USD, \$60,000 USD, \$50,000 USD, and \$25,000 USD. Two couples indicated they earned CAD (Canadian dollars) without reporting the amount, and one reported an amount without indicating country. This sample, compared to national medium US income of around \$60,000 (US Census data, 2018), was relatively wealthy. According to the Pew Research Center (2016), among American Jewish households, 44% of families earn \$100,000 plus, which approximates this study's sample.

Among the 90 men in this sample, 13.3% indicated they held a professional doctorate, 20.9% held a master's degree, 41.1% held a bachelor's degree, 1.1% held an associate's degree, 11.1% had some college experience, 5.6% held a high school diploma, and 7.8% had some high school experience. Of the 90 women, 5.6% held a professional doctorate, 31.1% held a master's degree, 40% held a bachelor's degree, 5.6% held an associate's degree, 12.2% had some college, and 5.6% held a high school diploma. In terms of education, this sample was highly educated, though also comparable to American Jews. The Pew Forum (2013) finds that 58% of American Jews are college graduates, 28% of whom have earned a post-graduate degree, which is more educated compared to the general US population. That is, in 2019, 28.1% reported high school was the highest level of education, and 22.5% of Americans finished four years of college (US Census Bureau, 2019).

Sexual and non-sexual behaviors. Because the practice of family purity theoretically involves the disruption of all sexual and non-sexual touch during menstruation and one week after menstruation (i.e., during niddah), this study measured to what degree couples in the sample (regardless of whether they practice FP) refrained

from certain behaviors during and one week after the wife’s menses. While nearly half of couples practicing family purity (N = 29) refrained from all lenient and strict behaviors, including not passing an item to each other, sleeping in conjoined beds, holding hands, and engaging in sexual intercourse during and one week following menstruation, many couples were unique in the behaviors they chose to discontinue during niddah. For example, some FP couples did not sleep in the same bed during niddah but sat on the same cushion of a couch. Further, some FP couples only refrained from sexual behaviors but continued to pass items to each other. Regarding the non-FP group, half of those couples (N = 12) refrained from at least one sexual behavior during menstruation, while the remaining half (N = 12) did not indicate refraining from any sexual behavior during menstruation. Only a small proportion of non-FP couples reported curtailing strict behaviors in the week following menstruation, and none of the non-FP couples reported refraining from any lenient behaviors. See Figures 1–4 for more detail.

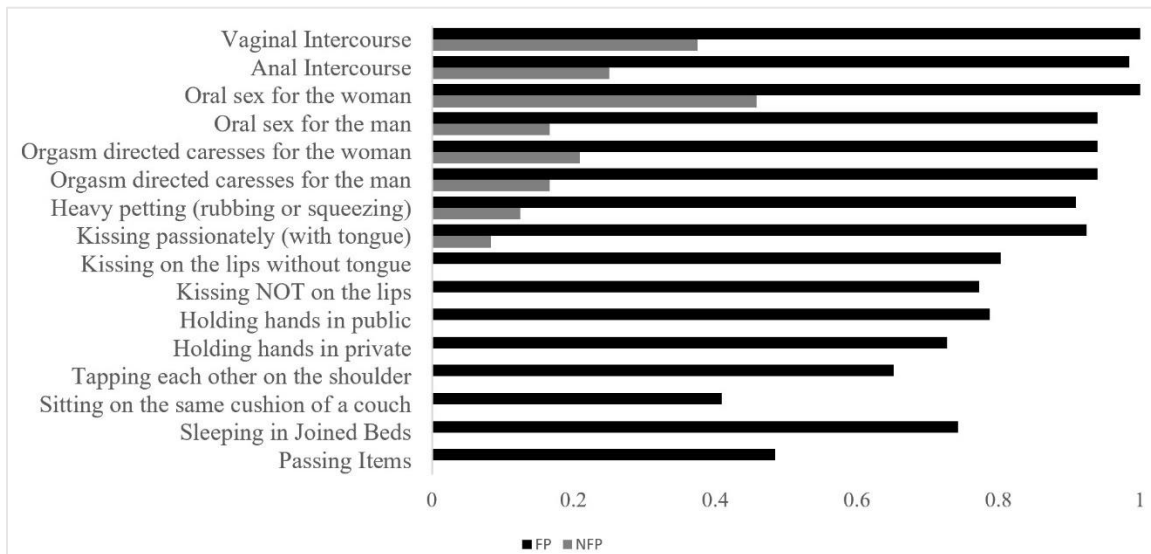


Figure 1. Behaviors FP and non-FP couples refrain from during menstrual period, as reported by wife.

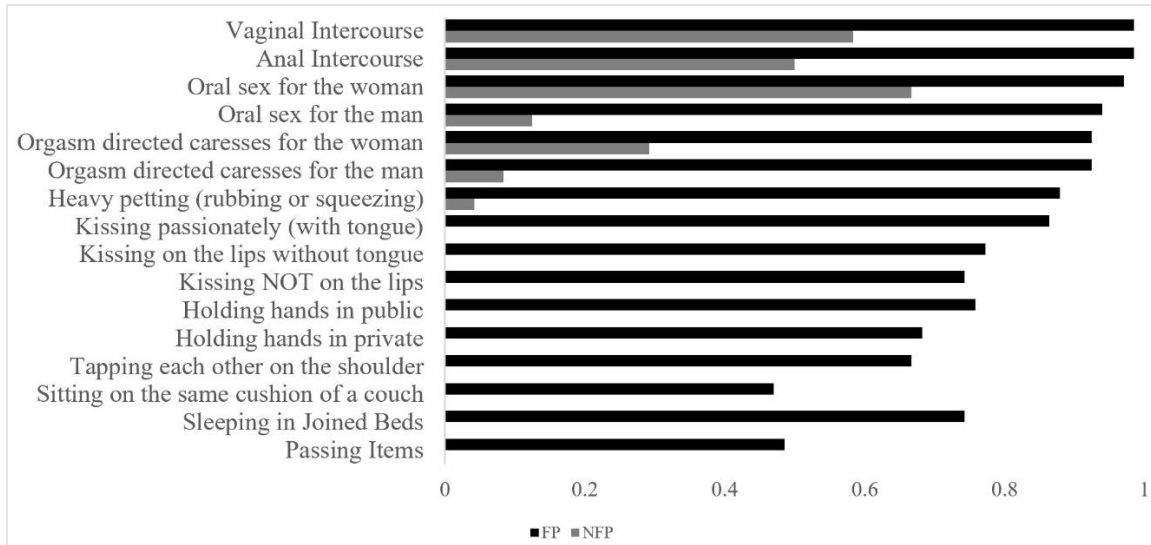


Figure 2. Behaviors FP and non-FP couples refrain from during menstrual period, as reported by husband.

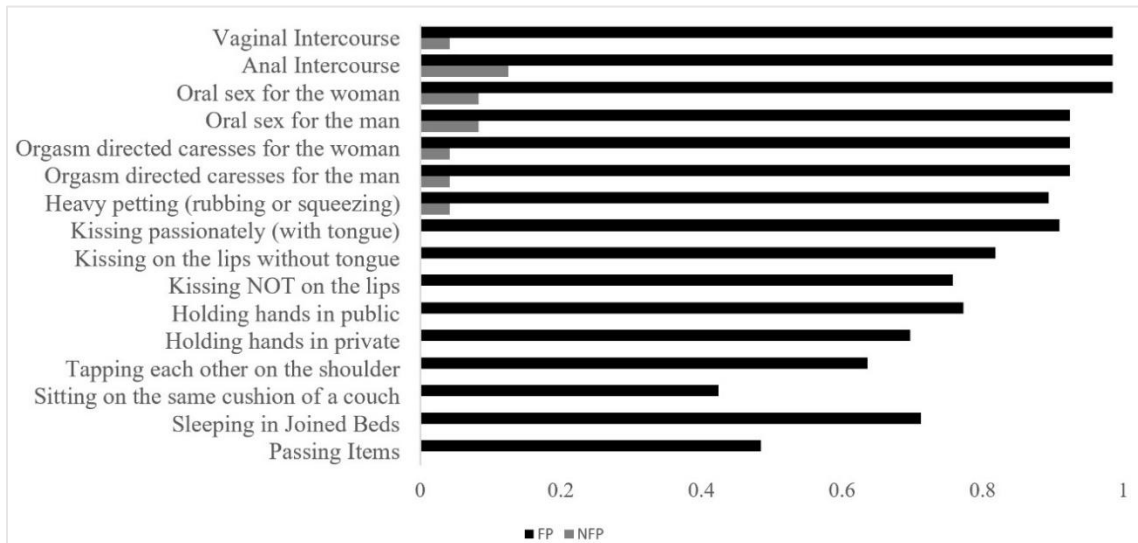


Figure 3. Behaviors FP and non-FP couples refrain from one week following menstrual period, as reported by wife.

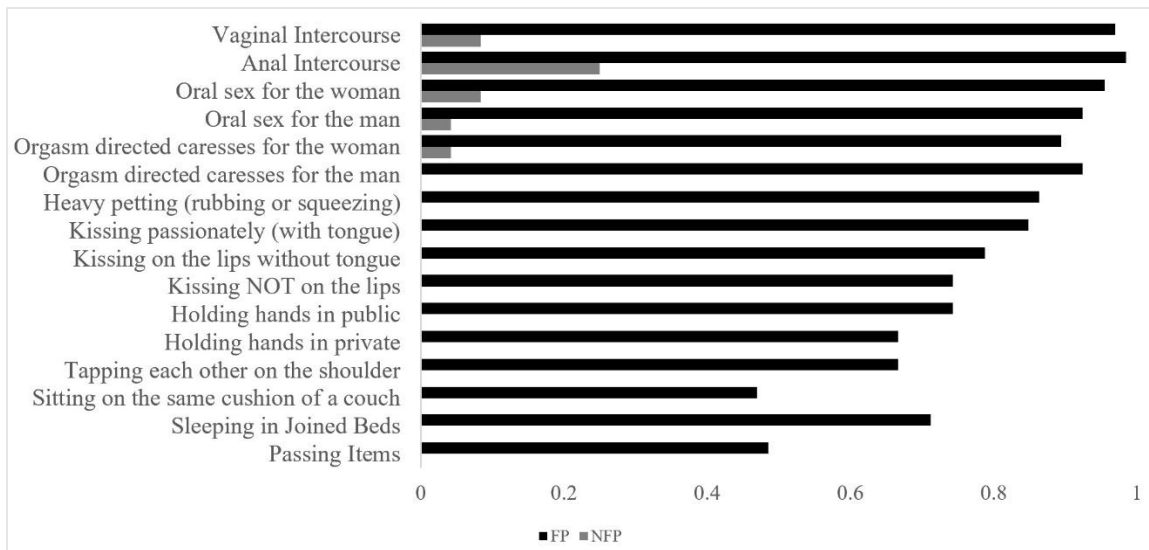


Figure 4. Behaviors FP and non-FP couples refrain from one week following wife’s menstrual period, as reported by husband.

To assess whether husband and wife in both FP and non-FP groups reported abstaining from the same sexual and non-sexual behaviors during and one week after menstruation, I assessed couple agreement (Table 2). There is a presumption that both husband and wife would report behaviors similarly. However, the data suggests some couple disagreement on both sides of FP and non-FP groups. FP couples showed more consistent agreement on sexual behaviors during menstruation and one week following menstruation than did non-FP couples. In general, FP couples were consistent on non-sexual and sexual behaviors, while non-FP couples were consistent on non-sexual behaviors but less consistent on their agreement of sexual behaviors. Specifically, non-FP couples were quite dissimilar (ranging from low 60% to low 70% agreement) during wife’s menstruation on oral sex for the woman (63%), anal intercourse (67%), and vaginal intercourse (71%). One week following menstruation, however, agreement improved these scores to 92%, 79%, and 96% agreement, respectively. This suggests that

during the wife's menstruation for non-FP couples, sexual behavior occurs for many couples, whereas for FP couples, sexual behavior is almost completely absent during the wife's menstruation and one week following menstruation.

Table 2

Percent Agreement Among FP Couples (N = 66) and Non-FP Couples (N = 24)

Regarding Items Refrained During Menstruation and Items Refrained One Week

Following Menstruation

	Item	FP Couple Agreement	Non-FP Couple Agreement
During Menstruation	Passing Items	94%	100%
	Sleeping in Joined Beds	94%	100%
	Sitting on the Same Cushion of the Couch	94%	100%
	Tapping each other on the shoulder	98%	100%
	Holding hands in private	95%	100%
	Holding hands in public	94%	100%
	Kissing NOT on the lips	97%	100%
	Kissing on the lips without tongue	97%	100%
	Kissing passionately (with tongue)	94%	100%
	Heavy petting (rubbing or squeezing)	97%	92%
	Orgasm directed caresses for the man	92%	92%
	Orgasm directed caresses for the woman	95%	83%
	Oral Sex for the man	94%	88%
	Oral Sex for the woman	100%	63%
	Anal Intercourse	97%	67%
Vaginal Intercourse	98%	71%	
One Week Following Menstruation	Passing Items	94%	100%
	Sleeping in Joined Beds	97%	100%
	Sitting on the Same Cushion of the Couch	92%	100%
	Tapping each other on the shoulder	97%	100%
	Holding hands in private	97%	100%
	Holding hands in public	97%	100%
	Kissing NOT on the lips	98%	100%
	Kissing on the lips without tongue	97%	100%
	Kissing passionately (with tongue)	94%	100%
	Heavy petting (rubbing or squeezing)	97%	96%
	Orgasm directed caresses for the man	97%	96%
	Orgasm directed caresses for the woman	97%	96%
	Oral Sex for the man	97%	92%
	Oral Sex for the woman	97%	92%
	Anal Intercourse	97%	79%
Vaginal Intercourse	97%	96%	

To explore another aspect of sexual behavior, I assessed penile-vaginal sexual frequency per month (see Figures 5 and 6). The median and mode of sexual frequency for non-FP couples is 1–4 times per month. The median and mode for FP couples is 5–8 times per month. FP husbands and wives appear reasonably consistent in their responses, Spearman’s $r = .87, p < .001$, as do non-FP husbands and wives, Spearman’s $r = .84, p < .001$.

However, when asked specifically about sexual behaviors during the week of menstruation, non-FP husband and wife responses showed more disagreement. For example, during the wife’s menstruation, there was 63% agreement on whether the couple refrains from oral sex for the woman. This changed to a 93% agreement between non-FP husband and wife regarding oral sex for the woman one week following the wife’s menstruation. FP husband and wife appear relatively consistent in their reports of the sexual behaviors they refrain from during menstruation and one week following menstruation.

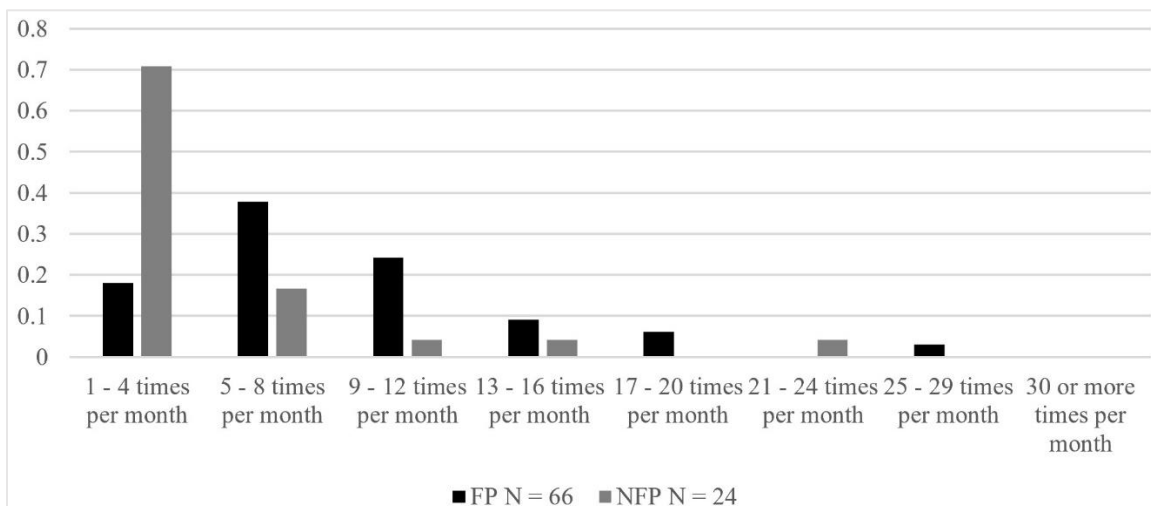


Figure 5. Percentage of wife reporting of penile-vaginal sexual frequency per month.

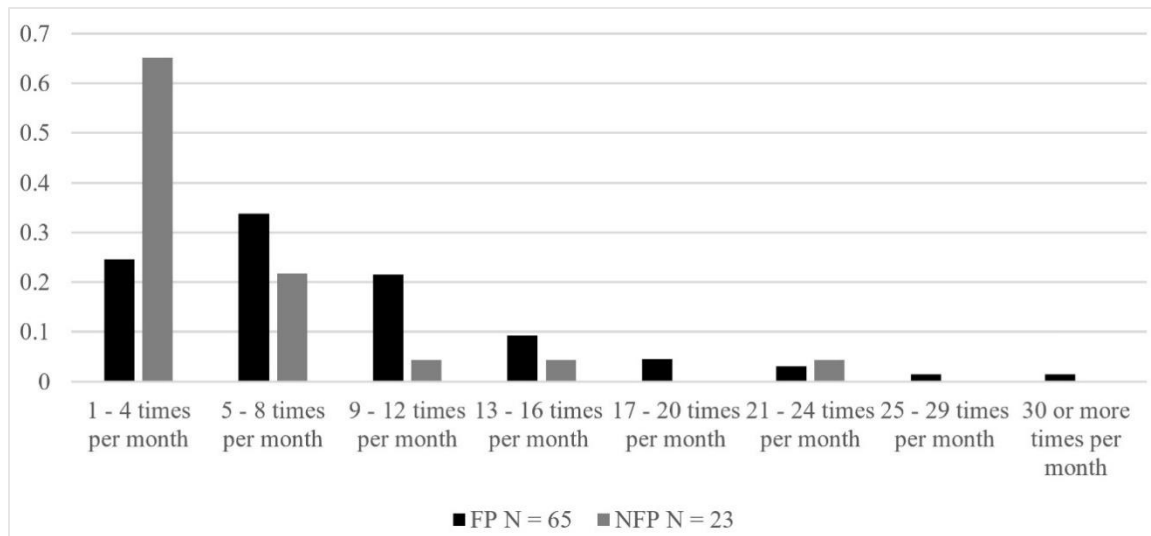


Figure 6. Percentage of husband reporting of penile-vaginal sexual frequency per month.

Research Questions

RQ1: Are there differences in self-expansion scores between practicing FP and non-FP couples?

A repeated measures analysis was assessed to explore differences in self-expansion between couples (i.e., FP and non-FP). Between couples, non-FP couples ($M = 5.04$; $SD = .14$) report greater self-expansion than FP couples ($M = 4.64$; $SD = .09$), $F(87) = 5.935$, $p = .017$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. To compare spouses in each group, I computed t-tests. FP husbands reported lower scores of self-expansion ($M = 4.60$; $SD = .82$) than non-FP husbands ($M = 5.03$; $SD = .80$), $t(87) = -2.189$, $p = .031$, $d = .533$. Approaching significance, FP wives also reported lower scores for self-expansion ($M = 4.68$; $SD = .88$) than non-FP wives ($M = 5.06$; $SD = .77$), $t(88) = -1.869$, $p = .065$, $d = .459$. Effect sizes for all tests suggest moderate differences between FP and non-FP couples.

RQ2: How are boredom and marital length for husbands and wives associated with the practice of family purity compared to husbands and wives not practicing family purity?

A repeated measures analysis was assessed to explore differences in boredom between couples (i.e., FP and non-FP) and boredom within couples (i.e., husband and wife). Multivariate tests suggest a significant interaction between spouse and marriage length, Wilks' Lambda = .945, $F(1, 87) = 5.073$, $p = .027$, $\eta^2 = .055$.

Regression analysis suggests a positive relationship between wives' boredom and marital length, $F(1, 89) = 5.567$, $p = .021$, $\beta^* = .244$. Husbands' boredom, however, does not appear affected by marital length, $F(1, 89) = .220$, $p = .640$, $\beta^* = .050$. To further probe these relationships, bivariate correlations between marriage length and boredom revealed a stronger correlation between marriage length and boredom for non-FP wives ($r = .401$), $p = .052$ than FP wives ($r = .194$), $p = .118$).

Among FP and non-FP husbands, there appeared no discrepancy between groups and bivariate correlations—FP husbands ($r = .031$), $p = .805$, non-FP husbands ($r = .096$), $p = .654$.

RQ3: Are there differences in closeness, ideal closeness, and closeness discrepancies based on whether the couple practices family purity?

Table 3

FP and Non-FP Wives Measures of Closeness Variables

Variable	FP Mean (SD)	Non-FP Mean (SD)	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Sequenced Bonferroni
Wife							
Ideal Closeness	6.25 (.94)	5.75 (1.11)	2.107	87	.038*	.482	.05/16 = .003125
Current Closeness	5.49 (1.65)	5.09 (1.67)	1.01	88	.311	.265	.05/10 = .005
Closeness Discrepancy	.80 (1.20)	.66 (1.20)	.464	87	.644	.111	.05/5 = .01
Husband							
Ideal Closeness	6.25 (1.03)	6.21 (1.02)	.154	87	.878	.037	.05/2 = .025
Current Closeness	5.31 (1.48)	5.42 (1.59)	-.303	87	.763	.071	.05/4 = .0125
Closeness Discrepancy	1.00 (1.26)	.96 (1.40)	.134	86	.894	.031	.05/1 = .05

Note. * $p = .05$

Table 3 reports differences between FP and non-FP groups on current closeness, ideal closeness, and closeness discrepancies. The only differences found were between wives. FP wives report larger closeness ideals than non-FP wives. A visual representation is reported in Figure 7.

Between couples, FP couples reported almost zero discrepancy between ideal closeness scores ($M = .00$; $SD = 1.25$) compared to non-FP couples ($M = .46$; $SD = 1.18$), $t(87) = -1.558$, $p = .123$, $d = .378$, $\Delta_{\text{mean}} = .46$. Specifically, FP couples on average report zero discrepancy in their ideal levels of closeness, while non-FP couples report disagreement in ideal closeness. Non-FP husbands report a higher ideal closeness score

than their non-FP wives. It seems the only differences between FP and non-FP groups on closeness scores was ideal closeness.

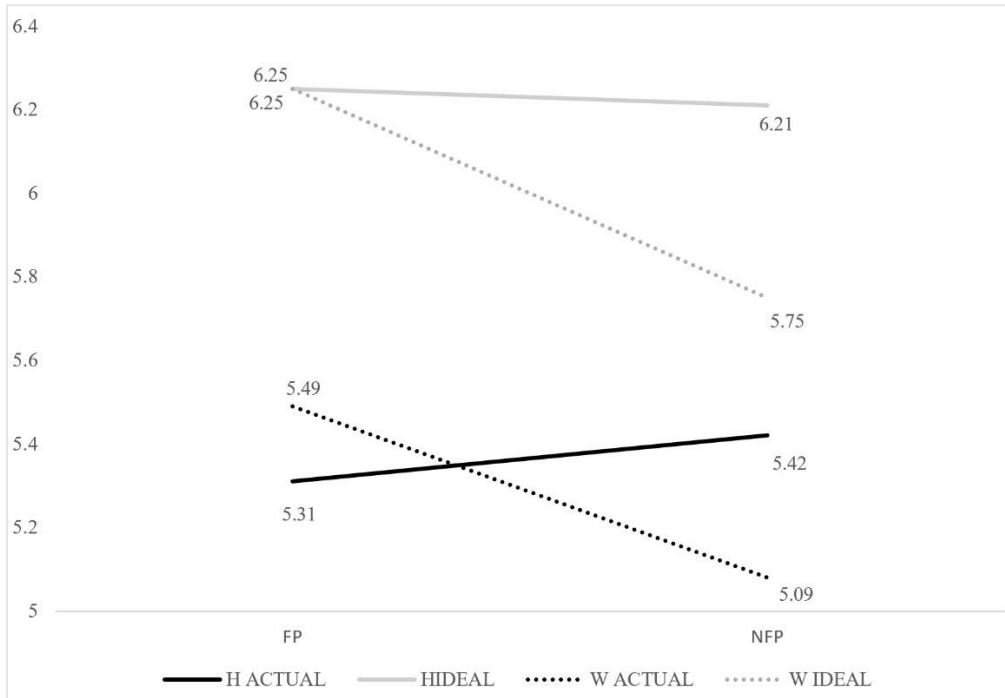


Figure 7. Actual and ideal closeness by spouse and FP/non-FP.

RQ4: How do closeness and closeness discrepancies relate to marital and sexual satisfaction among FP and non-FP husband and wife groups?

Results suggest no association with the FP group and current closeness scores. In addition, there is no association with the practice of FP and wife marital satisfaction and wife sexual satisfaction. While the same was true for husbands, there appears a weak correlation that approached significance among the FP practice and sexual satisfaction, ($r = -.189, p = .074$). In general, wives' current closeness has a stronger association with marital satisfaction ($r = .69$) than sexual satisfaction ($r = .38$). Wives' closeness discrepancy is also more strongly associated with marital satisfaction ($r = -.68$) than sexual satisfaction ($r = .38$). This pattern was similar among husbands, though correlations between husband closeness and closeness discrepancy appear slightly smaller. Statistics are reported in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Correlations Among FP/Non-FP, Current IOS, Wife Sexual Satisfaction, and Wife

Marital Satisfaction N = 90

	FP Group	Current IOS	IOS Discrepancy	Wife Sex Satisfaction	Wife Marital Satisfaction
FP	-	-.108	-.050	-.116	.077
Current IOS		-	-.790***	.384***	.689***
IOS Discrepancy			-	-.363***	-.678***
Wife Sex Satisfaction				-	.443***
Wife Marital Satisfaction					-

Note. FP Group = 0, Non-FP Group = 1; *** $p < .001$, ** $p = .01$, * $p = .05$

Table 5

Correlations Among FP/Non-FP, IOS Closeness Discrepancy, Husband Sexual

Satisfaction, and Husband Marital Satisfaction N = 90

	FP Group	Current Closeness	IOS Discrepancy	Husband Sex Satisfaction	Husband Marital Satisfaction
FP	-	.032	-.014	-.189 ^a	.087
Current Closeness		-	-.698***	.229**	.520***
IOS Discrepancy			-	-.399***	-.512***
Husband Sex Satisfaction				-	.487***
Husband Marital Satisfaction					-

Note. FP Group = 0, Non-FP Group = 1; *** p <.001, ** p = .01, * p =.05;

^a p = .074

RQ5: Are there differences in sexual closeness, ideal sexual closeness, and sexual closeness discrepancies based on whether the couple practices family purity?

Table 6 reports differences between FP and non-FP groups on current sexual closeness, ideal sexual closeness, and sexual closeness discrepancies. Contrast to findings on general closeness in the relationship (i.e., IOS closeness scores), findings showed that FP couples were significantly higher in their levels of sexual closeness than non-FP couples. They also reported significantly higher level of ideal sexual closeness than their non-FP counterparts. Both of these findings had large effect sizes ($d = .619$ and $.757$, respectively).

There were differences in sexual IOS closeness scores between FP wives ($M = 4.92$; $SD = 1.79$) and non-FP wives ($M = 3.83$; $SD = 1.74$), $t(88) = 2.584$, $p = .011$, $d = .619$. There were also differences in ideal sexual closeness scores between FP wives ($M =$

6.37; SD = .93) and non-FP wives (M = 5.58; SD = 1.14), $t(87) = 3.329$, $p = .001$, $d = .757$. However, there were no significant differences in sexual IOS closeness discrepancies between FP wives (M = 1.38; SD = 1.58) and non-FP wives (M = 1.88; SD = 1.60), $t(87) = -1.297$, $p = .198$, $d = .309$.

A different pattern emerged among husbands. There were differences in actual sexual IOS closeness scores between FP husbands (M = 5.09; SD = 1.73) and non-FP husbands (M = 4.00; SD = 1.91), $t(87) = 2.570$, $p = .012$, $d = .599$. There were no differences in ideal sexual closeness scores between FP husbands (M = 6.39; SD = .99) and non-FP husbands (M = 6.25; SD = 1.33), $t(86) = .540$, $p = .590$, $d = .121$. There were differences among sexual IOS closeness discrepancies between FP husbands (M = 1.31; SD = 1.64) and non-FP husbands (M = 2.25; SD = 1.82), $t(86) = -2.315$, $p = .023$, $d = .540$. Thus, FP husbands reported greater sexual closeness and less discrepancy between their desired and obtained level of sexual closeness than non-FP husbands, but the groups ostensibly have the same ideal levels of sexual closeness.

To explore dyadic differences between FP couples and non-FP couples, difference scores between husband and wife's ideal sexual closeness were compared. There was greater dyadic difference in ideal sexual closeness for non-FP couples (M = .67; SD = 1.17) than FP couples (M = .03; SD = 1.18), $t(86) = -2.254$, $p = .027$, $\Delta_{\text{mean}} = -.64$. Thus, the data suggests non-FP husbands and wives have more divergent ideals for sexual closeness, whereas FP couples report relatively consistent ideal sexual closeness levels.

Figure 8 plots the actual and ideal sexual closeness scores for husbands and wives in both FP and non-FP couples. The graph clearly shows that husbands in both groups maintain a high ideal for sexual closeness. FP husband and wife dyads have almost

identical scores on ideal sexual closeness; non-FP couples, however, are quite different in their ideal levels of sexual closeness.

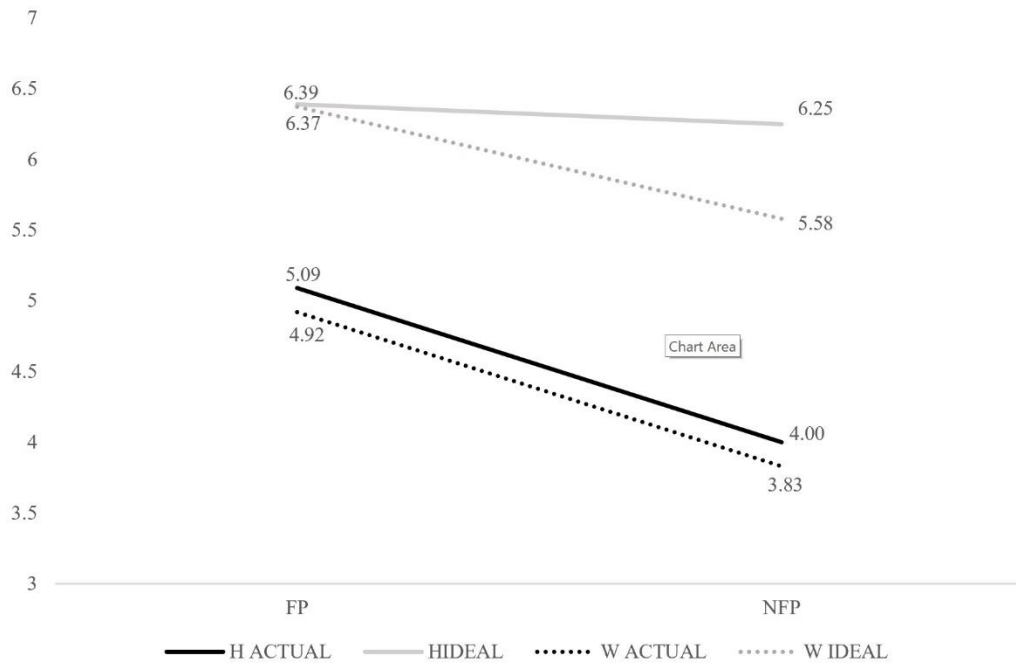


Figure 8. Plots of actual and ideal sexual closeness scores by sex and group.

Table 6

FP and Non-FP Husband and Wife Measures of Sexual Closeness

Variable	FP Mean (SD)	Non-FP Mean (SD)	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Sequenced Bonferroni
Wife							
Ideal Sexual Closeness	6.37 (.93)	5.58 (1.14)	3.329	87	.001**	.757	.05/18 = .0027
Current Sexual Closeness	4.92 (1.79)	3.83 (1.74)	2.584	88	.011*	.619	.05/17 = .00294
Sexual Closeness Discrepancy	1.38 (1.58)	1.88 (1.60)	-1.297	87	.198	.309	.05/12 = .00416
Husband							
Ideal Sexual Closeness	6.39 (.99)	6.25 (1.33)	.540	86	.590	.121	.05/7 = .00714
Current Sexual Closeness	5.09 (1.73)	4.00 (1.91)	2.570	87	.012*	.599	.05/18 = .00277
Sexual Closeness Discrepancy	1.31 (1.64)	2.25 (1.82)	-2.315	86	.023*	.540	.05/16 = .00333

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p = .01$, * $p = .05$

RQ6: How do sexual closeness scores relate to sexual and marital satisfaction, and how do they differ by FP and non-FP groups?

The FP group for wives was associated with slightly larger sexual closeness scores, $r = .27$, $p = .011$. FP and non-FP wives did not differ in sexual closeness discrepancies. While husbands' sexual closeness discrepancies appeared to have slightly greater robust associations of sexual and marital satisfaction, for wives, current sexual closeness scores showed slightly more robust associations with marital and sexual satisfaction than it did for discrepancies.

The FP group for husbands was associated with slightly larger sexual closeness scores ($r = .27$, $p = .012$) and less sexual closeness discrepancy, $r = .24$, $p = .023$. Among husbands in general, sexual closeness appears strongly correlated with sexual satisfaction

($r = .61$) and marital satisfaction ($r = .29$). In addition, sexual closeness discrepancies appear to be strongly correlated with sexual satisfaction ($r = -.68$) and marital satisfaction ($r = -.35$).

FP wives were associated with slightly larger sexual closeness scores ($r = .27$), $p = .011$ than non-FP wives. FP and non-FP wives did not differ in sexual closeness discrepancies. While husbands' sexual closeness discrepancies appeared to be slightly greater predictors of sexual and marital satisfaction, for wives, current sexual closeness scores showed slightly more robust associations with marital and sexual satisfaction than it did for discrepancies. Statistics are reported in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7

Correlations Among FP/Non-FP, Sexual IOS, Sexual Closeness Discrepancy, Wife Sexual Satisfaction, and Wife Marital Satisfaction N = 90

	FP Group	Current Sex Closeness	Sexual Closeness Discrepancy	Wife Sex Satisfaction	Wife Marital Satisfaction
FP	-	-.266*	.138	-.116	.077
Current Sex Closeness		-	-.828***	.756***	.400***
Sexual Closeness Discrepancy			-	-.750***	-.273**
Wife Sex Satisfaction				-	.443***
Wife Marital Satisfaction					-

Note. FP Group = 0, Non-FP Group = 1; *** $p < .001$, ** $p = .01$, * $p = .05$

Table 8

Correlations Among FP/Non-FP, Sexual IOS Discrepancy, Husband Sexual Satisfaction, and Husband Marital Satisfaction N =90

	FP Group	Current Sex IOS	Sexual Closeness Discrepancy	Husband Sex Satisfaction	Husband Marital Satisfaction
FP	-	-.266*	.242*	-.189 ^a	.087
Current Sex IOS		-	-.828***	.607***	.294**
Sexual Closeness Discrepancy			-	-.675***	-.351**
Husband Sex Satisfaction				-	.487***
Husband Marital Satisfaction					-

Note. FP Group = 0, Non-FP Group = 1; *** $p < .001$, ** $p = .01$, * $p = .05$;

^a $p = .074$

RQ7: Are there differences in sexual satisfaction for husbands and wives practicing FP compared to husbands and wives not practicing FP?

There were no differences between FP wives ($M = 4.25$; $SD = 1.48$) and non-FP wives ($M = 3.72$; $SD = 1.22$) on measures of sexual satisfaction, $t(88) = 1.579$, $p = .118$, $d = .393$. Mean differences among FP husbands ($M = 4.38$; $SD = 1.25$) and non-FP husbands ($M = 3.84$; $SD = 1.29$) approached significance, $t(88) = 1.807$, $p = .074$, $d = .427$. Both mean differences, while not significant at the .05 level, were associated with small to moderate effect sizes.

RQ8: Are there differences in reports of maintenance behaviors between FP and non-FP husband and wife groups?

Differences between groups are reported in Table 9. The only significant finding was positivity. Non-FP husbands ($M = 4.23$; $SD = .50$) reported more use of positivity

than FP husbands ($M = 3.91$; $SD = .57$), $p = .017$, $d = .596$. This was the only difference between FP and non-FP groups.

Table 9

Mean Differences on Maintenance Between FP/Non-FP Wives and FP/Non-FP

Husbands

Maintenance Variable	FP Mean (SD)	Non-FP Mean (SD)	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Sequenced Bonferroni
<i>Wife</i>							
Positivity	3.90(.56)	4.05 (.50)	1.133	88	.260	.277	.05/10 = .005
Openness	4.04 (.72)	3.99 (.75)	.298	88	.766	.074	.05/4 = .0125
Assurances	4.05 (.60)	4.54 (.59)	.239	88	.811	.057	.05/3 = .01667
Physical Affection	4.00 (.93)	3.97 (1.00)	.121	88	.904	.028	.05/1 = .05
Verbal Affection	4.05 (.18)	4.18 (.90)	.594	88	.554	.139	.05/7 = .00714
<i>Husband</i>							
Positivity	3.91 (.57)	4.23 (.50)	2.427	88	.017*	.596	.05/17 = .00294
Openness	3.28 (.93)	3.48 (.89)	.914	88	.363	.220	.05/10 = .005
Assurances	4.32 (.66)	4.34 (.63)	.165	88	.869	.039	.05/3 = .01667
Physical Affection	3.93 (.94)	4.03 (1.06)	.417	88	.677	.097	.05/5 = .01
Verbal Affection	3.65 (.97)	3.94 (1.01)	1.241	88	.218	.292	.05/12 = .00416

Note. * $p = .05$ level

RQ9: How are sexual closeness and sexual closeness discrepancy related to maintenance behavior within the four FP wife/non-FP wife/ FP husband/non-FP husband groups?

Regression coefficients suggest sexual closeness and sexual closeness discrepancies as predictors of the five measured maintenance variables operate differently among the four groups (FP husbands/wives, and non-FP husbands/wives). Controlling for

current sexual closeness, increases in sexual closeness discrepancies predict positive use of physical affection, verbal affection, and positivity for FP wives. Patterns were different among FP husbands in that, when controlling for current sexual closeness, increases in sexual closeness discrepancies predicted less use of physical affection. While non-significant, when controlling for sexual closeness, increases in sexual closeness discrepancies predicted less use of all maintenance behaviors for non-FP husbands and wives. Coefficients are reported in Table 10.

Table 10

Regression Coefficients for Maintenance Behavior Predictors

		Current Sexual Closeness (<i>B</i> *)	P value	Sexual Closeness Discrepancy(<i>B</i> *)	P value	
Wives	FP					
	Verbal Affection	.749	.001**	.539	.016*	
	Physical Affection	.945	<.001***	.572	.006**	
	Assurances	.394	.097	.363	.126	
	Openness	.372	.116	.400	.092	
	Positivity	.796	<.001***	.576	.010*	
	Non-FP					
	Verbal Affection	.099	.736	-.467	.122	
	Physical Affection	.412	.169	-.164	.576	
	Assurances	.269	.339	-.376	.186	
	Openness	.196	.520	-.336	.274	
	Positivity	.187	.586	-.050	.884	
	Husbands	FP				
		Verbal Affection	-.032	.982	-.274	.245
Physical Affection		-.192	.374	-.608	.006**	
Assurances		.074	.755	-.148	.532	
Openness		.062	.778	-.360	.106	
Positivity		.296	.188	-.096	.667	
Non-FP						
Verbal Affection		-.090	.776	-.386	.229	
Physical Affection		-.021	.944	-.488	.107	
Assurances		.267	.406	-.030	.925	
Openness		-.210	.526	-.127	.701	
Positivity		.254	.440	.110	.738	

Notes. Coefficients are standardized regression coefficients; * $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$, *** $p = <.001$

RQ10: Are there differences in cues for sexual desire based on whether the wife practices family purity?

There were no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($p = .05$) between non-FP wives and FP wives and their reports of cues for sexual desire. Approaching significance, ($p = .097$), FP wives reported greater romantic cues for sexual desire than non-FP wives, with a small to medium effect size ($d = .383$). See Table 11.

Table 11

FP and Non-FP Cues for Sexual Desire

Variable	FP Mean (SD)	Non-FP Mean (SD)	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Sequenced Bonferroni
Wife							
Romantic Cues	3.52 (.81)	3.19 (.87)	1.676	88	.097	.393	.05/14 = .00357
Emotional Bonding Cues	4.17 (.76)	4.02 (.84)	.789	88	.432	.178	.05/8 = .00626
Erotic Cues	3.71 (.88)	3.74 (.92)	-.154	87	.878	.036	.05/2 = .025

Discussion

The goal of study two was to compare FP and non-FP couples in terms of sexual and non-sexual behaviors and to answer research questions anchored in self-expansion theory (Aron & Aron, 1986). This was the first communication study exploring sexual behaviors of Torah-observant married couples and how their sexual behaviors compare to Jewish non-Torah-observant married couples. By selecting a comparison group of Jewish couples, the sampling may help control for exogenous variables like community support that might otherwise impact marital relationships (Marks, 2005) and thereby help to isolate the effects of family purity observance on outcomes. Overall, findings showed

differences between FP and non-FP groups in ideal sexual closeness, sexual closeness, sexual closeness discrepancies, self-expansion scores, boredom, and maintenance relating to sexual closeness and sexual closeness discrepancy. These novel finding suggests that the practice of FP might be beneficial as a framework for marital maintenance and is worthy of future study.

Findings, not surprisingly, suggest sexual and non-sexual behaviors are different between FP and non-FP couples during wife's menstruation and one week following. The overwhelming majority of FP couples (above 90%) refrained from sexual behaviors during the wife's menstrual period and for one week following. Non-FP couples appeared to engage in a variety of sexual behaviors during menstruation and one week following. Thus, and as expected, marital interactions during these time periods are different for FP couples versus non-FP couples and permits more investigation into these distinct groups.

Among FP couples, findings verified that many of the "lenient" behaviors during niddah (e.g., sitting on the same cushion of a couch) were not practiced by all FP couples. While husbands and wives demonstrated strong couple agreement in this area, this finding suggests that interpretation of these rules can vary per couple, and when it comes to these sets of rules, we cannot assume that every couple practicing FP behaves in the same way. As expected, non-FP couples did not refrain from any lenient behaviors during menstruation and one week following menstruation. However, non-FP couples did report refraining from some strict behaviors (e.g., oral sex for the woman).

Findings suggest that these two groups engage in different approaches to marital sexual intimacy. There was excellent couple agreement (well into the 90th percentile) between FP husbands and wives regarding which sexual and non-sexual behaviors the

couple refrained from during menstruation and one week following. This shows clearer mutual understanding between husband and wife of expectations during these times. Among non-FP couples, however, the partners disagreed about whether they refrained from certain sexual behaviors during the wife's menstruation, including oral sex for the woman (63%), anal intercourse (67%), and vaginal intercourse (71%). These findings suggest that, among many possibilities, non-FP couples might not be aware of the timing of the wife's menstrual period or have not communicated about sexual behaviors and expectations during this time. What we do know is that sexual communication is important to the sexual health of the relationship (Mallory et al., 2019). It appears that, overall, FP couples are more or less on the same page when it comes to sexual behaviors over the course of the wife's biological rhythms. This makes sense because, for FP couples, their sexual relationship revolves around the wife's biological rhythms.

In this study, FP couples reported more sexual closeness and less sexual closeness discrepancies than non-FP couples, which may result from the presumed absence of communication about the wife's biological rhythms. Previous studies have found that sexual closeness discrepancies are associated with lower levels of sexual satisfaction (Frost et al., 2017). Findings also showed that, on the whole, FP couples reported more penile-vaginal sex than non-FP couples. This suggests that the absence of sexual intimacy during niddah might encourage increased sexual intimacy during tehora. These findings suggest that these two groups engage in different approaches to marital sexual intimacy during the course of the month, and as will be discussed below, that this might influence sexual closeness and sexual closeness discrepancies.

FP couples reported greater sexual closeness than non-FP couples. Conversely, non-FP husbands reported greater sexual closeness discrepancy than their wives. Among many possibilities, non-FP wives might not desire as much sexual closeness as their husband's desire. Findings suggest FP wives have greater sexual closeness ideals and report greater sexual closeness in general; the FP framework might be meaningful for this area of marital health for wives and their desire for sexual closeness.

In addition, findings suggest FP and non-FP couples might approach sexual closeness discrepancies and their use of the five measured maintenance variables differently and perhaps are invariant in their marital maintenance behaviors. To explore this, I computed additional regression models. While there may not have been a large enough sample size, controlling for current levels of sexual closeness, non-FP husbands and wives' use of the five measured maintenance behaviors was not significantly affected by sexual closeness discrepancies. However, all regression coefficients of maintenance variables were negative, which implies that with increased sexual closeness discrepancies, non-FP husbands and wives used less maintenance behaviors. In comparison, controlling for sexual closeness, increases in sexual closeness discrepancies predicted increases in use of physical affection, verbal affection, and positivity for FP wives. Findings suggest that for FP husbands, controlling for sexual closeness, increases in sexual closeness discrepancies predict a decrease in physical affection. More research is needed to understand these relationships, but overall, findings point to sexual closeness and sexual closeness discrepancy positively predicting at least three types of maintenance behavior for FP wives. While the beta coefficients for non-FP wives are moderately strong, their accompanying p values were non-significant. That is, for non-FP wives,

accounting for current sexual closeness scores, increases in sexual closeness discrepancies predicted lower reports of maintenance behavior, most notably assurances, openness, and physical affection. Due to the moderate effect size, perhaps there was not enough power to detect significant differences.

Finally, findings suggest no correlation between boredom and marriage length for husbands in either group; however, findings point to a strong positive correlation between boredom and marital length for non-FP wives but not for FP wives. Among many possible implications for the marriage, this could lead to a host of negative outcomes. Thus, the FP framework may stave off boredom for wives and relate to more satisfied marriages in the long-term. Future research can incorporate longitudinal research design to explore whether the FP practice is helpful at mitigating boredom.

While study one findings found that FP wives' sexual desire was enhanced during niddah, there were no significant differences (.05 significance level) among cues for sexual desire between FP and non-FP wives. However, a small to moderate effect size ($p = .097$, $d = .393$) suggests FP wives might experience more romantic cues for sexual desire than non-FP wives. Romantic cues for sexual desire include watching a sunset, dancing closely, or a massage to ignite feelings of sexual desire with one's spouse. Importantly, many of these romantic cues for sexual desire might be off-limits during niddah. For example, some of the romantic cues for sexual desire included: "watching a sunset with your spouse," "being in a hot tub with your spouse," "laughing with your spouse," or "dancing closely with your spouse." Some of these cues might be considered too romantic to engage in together, and others might be considered off-limits. Participants in study one noted that interacting with their spouse had a different feel during niddah

because it was not coupled with the physical and added a sense of mystery to their communication. Participants in study one also noted their sexual desire as enhanced during niddah, thus, more research is needed to unpack how these romantic cues impact sexual desire for married women. Perhaps watching a sunset during tehora would not be as sexually exciting as it would be during niddah, when sex is off-limits. The old axiom “wanting what you can’t have” might have real implications for sexual desire during niddah.

Finally, non-FP husbands and wives reported overall greater levels of self-expansion scores than FP husbands and wives. Implications for this finding will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

All marriages face trials and tribulations. One of those challenges involves the ebb and flow of sexual desire. Married couples depend on each other for sexual fulfillment (Perel, 2007), deep emotional bonds, and personal growth (Finkel, Ming Hui, Carswell, & Larson, 2014). However, sustaining sexual desire and preserving marital closeness is difficult because sexual desire also requires ongoing autonomy and novelty (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Ferreirra et al., 2014; McCarthy & Farr, 2012; Perel, 2006; Sims & Meana, 2010). Diminished sexual desire is a major reason couples enter therapy (Ellison, 2002). Attempting to rekindle the flame, wives wear lingerie and schedule a date night amongst other techniques, but many are still dissatisfied with their attempts (Hebernck, Mullinax, Mark, 2014). Incorporating methods to nurture autonomy that are easily accessible to most couples might help them sustain marital sexual desire. This dissertation has provided preliminary evidence that prosocial distancing can enhance autonomy that instills novelty, sexual desire, and sexual closeness.

In general, women report greater sexual desire mid-cycle, around 14 days after menstruation, typically around the time of ovulation (Bullivant et al., 2004; Graham, Janssen, & Sanders, 2000; Rudski, Bernstein, & Mitchell, 2011); Stanislaw & Rice, 1988). The FP timeframe aligns with this biological rhythm. Indeed, FP couples consolidate sexual and physical contact during two weeks of the month, beginning with 7 clean days post menstruation and continuing until the next menstruation. Non-FP couples, however, approach touch and intimate sexual behaviors differently throughout the menstrual cycle; they often do not have clear demarcations for sexual activity and can

be intimately active throughout the month. This is not so with FP couples who do not have sex for two weeks out of the month but appear to have more sexual contact in the remaining two weeks than non-FP couples have in one month. I will elaborate upon this finding below and also discuss limitations in the sexual frequency measure, but first, it is important to note that the difference between FP and non-FP groups in regard to the timing of their physical relationship demonstrates they can be treated as distinct sets and forms a basis for further study of marital maintenance behaviors.

While this study found that Torah-observant Jewish couples abstain from sexual intimacy during menstruation and 7 days after, there are other groups that also change behavior during menstruation. For example, in some Native American traditions, women retreat to a “moon lodge” and are free from daily chores. As with the FP women, these menstrual customs can provide women with autonomy and solidarity (Crooks & Bauer, 2014). Social science has devoted tomes of work regarding menstrual customs, but further discussion of this topic exceeds the scope of this dissertation.

FP wives reported a greater sense of autonomy during niddah. For FP wives, sex and touch were off-limits for these two weeks. This allowed her to tend to herself while not worrying about her husband feeling rejected. Research has found that sexual rejections are common in married and cohabiting couples and that more frequent rejection is associated with lower sexual and marital satisfaction (Byers & Heinlein, 1989). Negotiating when and how often to have sex is a common relationship conflict that is difficult to resolve (Metts & Cupach, 1989). Different levels of sexual desire between husband and wife are inevitable, and generally, husbands tend to want sex more than their wives (Baumeister et al., 2001; Frost & Donovan, 2015).

FP women explained that two weeks of no sex and zero sexual expectations created autonomy and was a “protective” measure to mitigate sexual rejection. As such, FP couples reported greater sexual closeness and engaged in sex more frequently than non-FP couples. It is plausible that the enhanced autonomy generated by niddah increases motivation to have more sexual activity during their ritually pure time.

Prior studies have found that one reason for a woman’s diminished sexual desire is due to over-availability of her husband (Sims & Meana, 2010). I suggest that the unavailability of the husband during niddah involves an element of the scarcity principle, in which “opportunities seem more valuable to us when they are less available” (Cialdini, 2009, p. 200). Cialdini (2009) suggests Romeo and Juliet developed intense devotion because their love was fueled by “extensive barriers” (p. 207). Cialdini (2009) further explains scarcity causes increased yearning, which is similar to what we found with FP wives during niddah.

The barriers to sex during niddah create a tension between lover and friend—the dialectic of restraint, a new dialectic discussed in Chapter 3. The dialectic of restraint extends relational dialectic theory (RDT; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) by proposing a friend-lover tension experienced by FP wives. This dissertation also adds to self-expansion theory (Aron & Aron, 1986) by suggesting prosocial distancing is one way to integrate expansion opportunities that promote closeness and do not threaten, but instead enhance, autonomy.

Theoretical Implications

Marital Maintenance

Marital maintenance can be viewed from many theoretical perspectives and different relationship contexts. In addition to studying co-resident marriage, research has explored maintenance behaviors in commuter marriages (Lindemann, 2017) and military deployment (Merolla, 2010). This dissertation adds to the vast body of research on this topic by investigating a unique population who practices distancing while remaining together.

While there are similarities amongst FP, commuter, and military marriages in that there are times when the couple are apart, FP couples must navigate distance while under the same roof. Therefore, while themes of enhanced autonomy are present in both commuter marriages (Lindemann, 2017) and FP marriages, the context is different because FP couples are apart while together. This dissertation, by examining co-resident married couples who abstain from sex for two weeks per month, expands our knowledge regarding relationship maintenance and how couples navigate closeness and distance. Being apart, together, produced a friend-lover tension for FP wives. I call this tension the dialectic of restraint.

Maintenance and the Dialectic of Restraint

Sexual desire is a motivational force that helps initiate contact in new relationships, but it is also a powerful force necessary to maintain established relationships (Birnbaum, 2017; Brezsnysak & Whisman, 2004). Couples do not often realize the importance of sexual desire as a maintaining function until that desire is gone and can lead to the dissolution of their marriage (Sprecher & Cate, 2004). While there are

many exciting stages in new relationships, major milestones in marriage, such as having children, are often associated with increased interpersonal commitment, stress, boredom, and burnout (Aron & Aron, 1986). What appears helpful about the FP framework is that novelty is re-created on a monthly basis, and otherwise taken-for-granted marital interactions become more meaningful.

The dialectic of restraint, the tension between the sex restricted friend and sexually available lover, was generated by macro forces (i.e., biblical commandments, Talmudic safeguards) that prescribe when FP wives guard against sexual behavior. These macro forces come in tension with the microculture of the marriage, where wife and husband must interpret which behaviors are “sexually suggestive” for them. Managing this tension produced maintenance strategies throughout the menstrual cycle for FP wives. The maintenance behaviors spawned by the dialectic of restraint in FP relationships might be especially change-worthy for non-FP wives, because for non-FP wives, boredom is positively associated with length of marriage. This correlation was not found in the FP group. I suggest that the dialectic of restraint is a motivational force that drive these differences.

The dialectic of restraint involves the interplay between friend and lover. Since FP couples are in a sanctioned sexual relationship, “lover” is always present but must be restrained during niddah, which fuels movement toward “friend.” The reciprocating tension produced by the movement from lover and friend generated mystery. The unfulfilled sexual desire promoted enhanced playfulness and necessitated other ways to communicate closeness. For FP women, the sexual unavailability of their spouse enhanced their sexual desire for their husband and appears to increase sexual frequency

when not in niddah. Since developing ways to maintain motivation for sexual desire throughout the marriage is an ongoing task, the FP framework offers a way to sustain sexual desire as the marriage endures.

During niddah, ordinary behaviors became eroticized. Berkowitz (2006) suggests mundane domestic activities (e.g., pouring wine, running a bath for one's spouse) were considered ancient forms of flirtation, which is why such rabbinic restrictions are in place during niddah. Findings from this current study suggest that these "ancient" forms of flirtation still exist for FP women. Beyond the influence of eroticized domestic activities, sexual desire was also often fueled during playful and laugh-filled interactions in which no physical contact was allowed. Bakhtin (1981) explains that during laughter, we are "close at hand" with an object (p. 23). I suggest playfulness generated by lover-restraint, further motivates longing and increases closeness.

In addition, during niddah, FP women report needing to create alternative ways (i.e., non-physical contact) to express their love, affection, and support. FP women report that their direct verbal expressions of affection to their husband during niddah, (e.g., "Thank you so much, you just made me so happy") leads their husbands to describe them as more loving. Perhaps FP wives' verbal expression of affection during niddah helps to maintain the relationship without physical contact, and explains why FP wives are inclined to enhance maintenance behaviors when they sense a discrepancy between perceived and ideal sexual closeness.

FP wives' sexual closeness discrepancies were associated with increased maintenance behaviors. These included physical affection, verbal affection, and positivity toward their husbands. These associations were not statistically replicated among non-FP

wives, where the coefficients were in the opposite direction. The negative direction of the coefficient for non-FP wives suggests FP and non-FP wives behave differently in light of sexual closeness discrepancies. In other words, FP wives respond to sexual closeness discrepancies by increasing maintenance behaviors.

According to theories of sanctification, when a person perceives something as sacred, they will go to great lengths to protect it (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). This theme was echoed by FP women explaining that mikveh and their marriage are of utmost priority. Perhaps FP wives consider their sexual closeness sacred and, thus, put greater effort into lessening any sexual closeness discrepancy. Since FP wives report greater sexual closeness with their husbands than non-FP wives, FP wives are more sexually interdependent. Thus, FP wives' maintenance behaviors directly benefit their spouse, themselves, and their marriage. It is possible FP wives consider it their responsibility to improve any perceived sexual closeness discrepancies.

FP husbands, however, responded differently on the survey than their wives when faced with perceived sexual closeness discrepancies. For FP husbands, greater sexual closeness discrepancy was associated with less physical affection during *tehora* (when they were allowed to touch). While FP husbands were not interviewed, I question whether the shortened time for sexual contact heightens the sensitivity of perceived sexual rejection. This might cause an unwillingness to expose vulnerability to their spouse out of fear of further rejection. While the direction of the association between physical affection and sexual closeness discrepancy was similar for FP husbands and non-FP husbands, the association was non-significant for the latter.

Self-Expansion and Sexual Closeness

Previous research has suggested a positive association between relationship self-expansion and sexual desire (Ferreira, et al., 2014; Raposo, Rosen, & Muise, 2020). This current study found that while FP couples report greater sexual closeness and FP wives report greater sexual desire, non-FP couples report greater self-expansion. One possible explanation for this finding is that FP wives' increased sexual desire during niddah, when sex is off limits, provides autonomy and motivates sexual closeness, which might be a greater motivating force than self-expansion.

Another possible explanation is that FP couples support each other in their individual expansion, which in turn benefits the couple. Partner support for individual self-expansion is distinct from relationship self-expansion, but the former was not assessed in this study. Yet another possibility is that non-FP couples in this study, while all Jewish, might come from different backgrounds relative to FP couples, who tend to be more religious and stay within their communities to seek relationships. Thus, non-FP couples may have more to learn about their spouse's background and experiences. Dissimilarities can be attractive because of growth opportunities (Aron & Aron, 1986).

In addition, the sanctioned space for the FP group might motivate sexual closeness. Sanctioned space could provide the autonomy needed to optimize the powerful effects of relationship self-expansion. Aron and Aron (1986) explain that in addition to the motivation to expand one's sense of self, there is an equally strong desire to integrate that expansion into one's self-concept. Therefore, the process of expansion and integration is iterative and generates growth. Perhaps the sanctioned space for the FP

couples provides an opportunity for the integration of the other's self-concept into their own.

One last explanation for the differences in the report of relationship self-expansion is that FP couples have a vision for their marriage set by rabbinic and biblical rules that the couple agree on from the inception of their union and continues throughout their marriage. Perhaps the FP practice throughout the marriage mitigates boredom, for wives in particular, as the marriage endures. As such, it is possible the FP couple's interactions throughout their marriage help them actualize individual self-expansion through the ideals of a Torah-observant marriage, in which family purity is a cornerstone. Perhaps relationship self-expansion is less essential than partner-supported individual expansion in these types of marriages.

Limitations

In exploring any new frontier, there are lessons learned that can be applied in future investigations. Limitations in this study include participant demographics, sample size, and measures. Therefore, while caution must be exercised in generalizing these findings, this study hopes to inspire future investigation into prosocial distancing as a maintenance tool for co-resident married couples.

Demographics

First, the sample in the study should not be considered representative of the Jewish population globally or in America, as it is unlikely that two-thirds of the dyads would be practicing family purity, because family purity tends to be a more religious Jewish practice, and around 20% of American individuals who identify as Jewish also say they are a Jew of no religion (Pew Research Center, 2013), i.e., secular or cultural Jews.

Intermarriage is an important aspect, and study two inclusion criteria limited husband and wife Jewish couples so that both wife and husband must identify as Jewish. Nearly all Jews, who also have a Jewish spouse report they plan to raise their children Jewish by religion. Therefore, limiting inclusion criteria to only Jewish married couples who both identify as Jewish are not representative of American Jewry are a unique subset to the Jewish population.

In addition, this study involved a limited number of Jewish couples who were relatively wealthy and educated compared to the general population. In addition, husbands were not interviewed in the qualitative study. Therefore, we do not know the lived experience of the husband or if the dialectic of restraint was equally apparent for FP husbands.

FP wives who participated in study one were open to discuss intimate aspects of their lives that they do not commonly share otherwise. These participants reported that the practice enhanced their marriage. This aspect of the study's findings are limited, however, because we do not know the stories of FP women who chose to not respond to recruitment materials due to discomfort talking about intimate experiences, felt it would be immodest talking about their marriage, or simply did not have access to my recruitment materials. Since recruitment for the quantitative study was disseminated on social media, synagogue's list-serves, online news outlets, and word of mouth, couples without internet access were left out. In addition, distribution on social media might have attracted participants who were comfortable responding to intimate survey questions, leaving out those uncomfortable to report on marital intimacies. There is a balance

between finding people who will talk and the limitations created by it. Future studies might be more liberal in using social media in an effort to be more inclusive.

Finally, one participant described the shame and guilt she and her husband experienced after their sexual transgression during niddah. While only one woman reported a transgression, it is possible other participants kept similar stories private. However, the data that was generated tells us there is a great deal of valuable information to be derived from this population.

Sample Size

The quantitative study, with a larger sample size, could have yielded more powerful results and allowed for more complex statistical models. Fewer non-FP couples completed the quantitative survey than FP couples, and more women completed the survey than men. This is consistent with other research that finds women respond to surveys more than men (Smith, 2008). The current sample was limited because inclusion in the quantitative study required responses from both husband and wife; many women's responses were not included because of a lack of a dyadic match. Moreover, the release of recruitment materials for the qualitative interview may have limited participation, as recruitment occurred one month before a major Jewish holiday that requires significant preparation for Jewish wives. Nonetheless, participation exceeded my expectations for both studies.

Measures

To assess relationship behaviors during niddah and one week following, participants were asked to select from a list those sexual and non-sexual behaviors they refrained from during specific time periods (i.e., during menstruation and one week

following menstruation). The manner in which these questions were posed left room for misinterpretation of the word “refrain.” Asking participants to endorse those behaviors they refrain from can be ambiguous, because if a couple never has oral sex, they also refrain from these behaviors during menstruation and thereafter. Rather than asking participants about behaviors from which they “refrain,” it would have been less ambiguous to ask participants to endorse “yes” or “no” to the behaviors they “do” engage in during menstruation, one week following menstruation, and during the remainder of the month. In addition, because this study did not ask participants to report frequency of sexual behaviors other than penile-vaginal frequency (e.g., oral sex for the man, oral sex for the woman, among other sexual behaviors) we cannot assess what are normal sexual behaviors for this sample. This limits the interpretation of the findings because we can only gauge the types of behaviors participants refrain from during niddah, and the frequency of penile-vaginal sexual intercourse during the month (i.e., during niddah).

The penile-vaginal sexual frequency measure selected for this study was also limited by the response options. The measure did not offer a response option that included less than once per month or “zero.” Rather, the sexual frequency measure started with the 1–4 times per month option. Since 20% of married couples have sex less than once per month (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2015), this causes a limitation in the measure. Since there were very few instances of missing data for this measure, it is assumed that participants chose the category that is most closely resembles their sexual frequency. In addition, the 1–4 option pools couples who have sex once per month with those who have sex four times per month. Sex once per month and sex four times per month might represent two different sexual relationships, therefore a more sensitive

measure regarding sexual frequency should be used. However, we should not entirely disregard the difference in sexual frequency between the two groups and instead consider the findings in this regard exploratory.

Furthermore, this study did not include masturbation as a sexual behavior. Including masturbation might add a fuller understanding of the sexual behaviors in FP and non-FP groups. I suspect that if the FP group scored less on the masturbation measure, because according to Jewish law male ejaculation should be confined to the vagina (Ribner, 2004), this might impact sexual interdependence. This might also explain why sexual frequency is greater in the FP group.

Finally, participants were asked sensitive questions involving sexual frequency and sexual predilections. By adding a social desirability measure, future studies can assess the influence this might have on responses.

Statistical Analysis

Finally, certain analytical strategies selected for the dissertation were chosen because it was an exploratory study. A traditional analytical approach would emphasize a 2-way ANOVA to explore interaction effects and then follow up on main effects for significant tests. Since this dissertation was an exploratory study and the first to assess meaningful differences between family purity married couples and Jewish non-practicing family purity couples, a less traditional and more exploratory approach was chosen.

Future Directions

Future research should incorporate longitudinal methods to explore how sexual desire fluctuates during the menstrual cycle. Since FP women in the qualitative interviews described heightened sexual desire during niddah, future research measuring

sexual desire at other points in the menstrual cycle would be helpful to discern how abstaining from sex during niddah and then reconnecting during tehora influences sexual desire and sexual frequency. Comparing FP women to non-FP at the same points in time would further elucidate the effects of prosocial distancing on sexual desire.

Future research might also explore possible differences between FP and non-FP wives' sexual desire for their spouse as influenced by romantic cues. It should be noted that many of the romantic cues for sexual desire are generally not permitted during niddah (e.g., touching your spouse's face; giving or receiving a massage from your spouse); therefore, future research should measure romantic cues for sexual desire that do not include physical touch during niddah (e.g., watching a sunset with your spouse; laughing with your spouse). Measuring romantic cues for sexual desire during tehora, however, should include cues that involve physical touch. In this study, all cues for sexual desire were combined and there was no differentiation between niddah and tehora.

This study found a stronger positive correlation between marriage length and boredom for non-FP wife group. This finding should be interpreted with caution because the sample was skewed toward the lower range of the marriage spectrum and the study did not employ a longitudinal design. Therefore, it would be informative to measure boredom at specific points in the marriage (i.e., newlyweds, incremental anniversaries, and menopause).

Future studies could also explore whether FP couples navigate the challenges of menopause differently than non-FP couples. FP couples might maintain sexual closeness because they have the tools to mitigate boredom and have more practice communicating affection in the absence of sexual touch.

Future studies should also include FP husbands to learn how they navigate the RDT tensions and whether the dialectic of restraint is evident, as found with their wives. It would also be productive to explore FP husbands' perception of sexual closeness discrepancies, and whether they take responsibility to lessen these discrepancies.

Dialectic of Restraint

Future studies might consider replicating the dialectic of restraint in an experimental design in which non-FP couples abstain from touch, sex, and other activities that might incite sexual behavior (e.g., undressing in front of the partner) during a wife's menstruation and one week following. Following these two weeks, sexual contact would be permitted until the next menstruation. These experimental manipulations would be compared to the non-FP control group who continue behaviors as usual.

Sexual Expectations During Menstruation

A review of the literature finds an absence of research surrounding marital sexual expectations during menstruation. Menarche (a woman's first period) typically occurs between ages of 11 and 15 and continues until menopause around age 51 (Crooks & Bauer, 2014). Therefore, women menstruate for about forty years, a significant portion of her life. We should learn more about the couple's sexual expectations and motivations for sexual behavior during menstruation. This might shed further light on marital sexual communication and longevity.

Future research should investigate whether communicating marital sexual expectations impacts sexual frequency, feelings of sexual rejection, and the way rejection is communicated and received. As sexual expectations during menstruation is an understudied topic, we do not know the impact of these interactions. I suspect that sexual

rejection might occur more frequently in non-FP marriages, especially as the couple ages and libido is diminished. It also possible FP couples are more sensitive to sexual rejection as their time for sex is limited.

Conclusion

The FP framework, with its sanctions toward physical intimacy at specific times during the menstrual cycle, provides a guide for married couples that might enhance sexual closeness and nurture autonomy. Moreover, the FP rules dictating physical intimacy at prescribed times (i.e., prosocial distancing) imbues otherwise mundane domestic activities with greater meaning. This, in turn, helps to create novelty and excitement while prioritizing the marriage.

FP requires wife and husband to agree on its practice and, therefore, they share a vision for their marriage, religion, and family. These practices encourage partner support for individuation and marital growth. Engrained in FP is the Torah teaching that, in order to experience all that life has to offer, we must also practice restraint.

The lessons learned from the FP practice can be particularly useful as society moves forward with navigating social distancing and couples are confined to their homes. Without their usual routine of the workplace, community, and anticipated adventures with others, couples who remain alone together will need ways to instill novelty and enrich autonomy. Incorporating prosocial distancing that requires creative ways to communicate closeness and affection can help couples endure hardships, build resiliency, and support individual growth throughout their marriage.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Jonathan Pettigrew
 Human Communication, Hugh Downs School of
 -
 Jonathan.Pettigrew@asu.edu

Dear Jonathan Pettigrew:

On 3/16/2017 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Exploring marital outcomes associated with maintained physical separation between husband and wife in the observant Jewish community
Investigator:	Jonathan Pettigrew
IRB ID:	STUDY00005963
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Form, Category: Consent Form; • Interview Script , Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment Script , Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 3/16/2017.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Melissa Framer
 Anthony Roberto
 Melissa Framer

APPENDIX B
STUDY ONE RECRUITMENT LETTER

I am Melissa Framer, a doctoral student under the direction of Drs. Anthony Roberto and Jonathan Pettigrew, in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University. We are conducting a research study on the Jewish law of family purity and its impact on the marital relationship.

We are looking for married Jewish women who currently observe family purity Law. Interviews will last approximately 60 minutes and will take place over Skype, face-to-face, or telephonically (whichever medium the interviewee prefers). With consent of the participant, interviews will be recorded, but all names will be changed and personal information will be kept confidential. You must be 18 years or older to participate and speak fluent English.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Additionally, if you know someone who meets the qualifications for the study, please contact us for more information.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Melissa Framer at: melissa.framer@asu.edu, or 480.646.7404

Thank you for your consideration.

Melissa Framer, M.A.
Anthony Roberto, Ph.D.
Jonathan Pettigrew, Ph.D.

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Demographics

1. How long have you been married?
2. How old were you when you got married?
3. Which branch of Judaism do you identify with?
4. How long have you been observant of the Jewish faith?
 - a. [if participant hasn't been observant whole life] can you tell me the story of how you became more observant?
4. How long have you been observing family purity Law (FP)?
 - a. Probe: Could you describe how you came to the decision to practice FP law? (individual decision, relational decision, before marriage, after marriage).
5. Do you have children? How many?
 - a. When were the children born relative to the length of your marriage?

Questions

6. In your opinion, what motivates you and your husband to observe FP?
7. Has there ever been a time when you did not observe FP?
 - a. Probe: Can you tell me more about what was going on at the time?
8. Can you describe the communication you have with your husband about Niddah?
 - a. Probe: Do you and your husband openly discuss your experience with Niddah? What kind of things do you talk about?
9. a. In general, what behaviors do you engage in during Niddah?
 - 8b. How do these behaviors differ from when you're not in Niddah?
10. How do you and your husband express closeness during Niddah?
 - a. How do these behaviors differ when you're not in Niddah?
11. Have you ever had to postpone, change plans, or not do something because you were in Niddah?
 - a. Probe: Can you tell me about a specific experience where this happened?
11. Does having children make it more or less difficult to practice Niddah?
12. How do you view going to the Mikveh?
 - a. Probe: Do you view it positively, negatively, neutral?
13. After visiting the Mikveh, how do you and your husband transition out of Niddah?
14. Do you think your husband might agree or disagree with anything we've talked about?
15. Overall, how would you describe your experience with FP?
16. Is there anything that you think is important to talk about that I haven't mentioned?
17. Would you feel comfortable answering anonymous survey questions that are similar to what we've talked about, or perhaps ask questions that are more specific to sexual satisfaction? Do you think your husband would feel comfortable answering similar questions?

APPENDIX D
STUDY TWO RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Potential Participant,

I'm collecting data for my dissertation and looking for Jewish married couples to fill out my survey on marital communication and intimacy. While I ask both husband and wife to fill out the survey, please fill it out on your own (i.e., not with your spouse). It should take around 15-20 minutes.

As a thank-you, I'm offering five dollars per participant (\$10 per couple) via an Amazon gift card. In lieu of the gift card, participants can designate an organization to donate the money, and I will send the money to that organization.

Participants must a) identify as Jewish, b) their spouse identifies as Jewish, c) be in a heterosexual marriage, d) live full-time with their spouse, e) are over 18, f) the wife is pre-menopausal, and g) understand English.

Please feel free to share the link with anyone who might be interested! Thank you so much!

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at melissa.framer@asu.edu or call at 480.646.7404. Thanks again.

APPENDIX E
STUDY TWO PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Dear Participant,

I am a Doctoral Candidate in the school of human communication at Arizona State University in the United States. With the guidance of my doctoral committee, I am conducting a research study to explore marital communication and sexual behaviors for married Jewish couples. For this reason, only participants who identify as Jewish are invited to participate in this study at this time. Eligible participants must be at least 18 years of age, able to fluently read English, identify as Jewish, in a heterosexual marriage, the female is pre-menopausal, and currently living with their married spouse. We expect around 50 couples to participate in this study.

I am asking for both husband and wife to complete the survey, but please complete the survey individually.

The survey will be answered via an online questionnaire that should last around 15 to 20 minutes, and can be answered on a smart phone, tablet, or computer. This study will help researchers better understand marital communication for Jewish couples and your participation is greatly valued.

To show our appreciation, five-dollars will be given to participants who complete the study (i.e., ten dollars per couple). At the end of the survey you will be directed to a separate page asking for your email to receive the five-dollars. Or, you can provide the name of a charitable organization and the money will be sent to that organization anonymously. Please note this is a separate link and in no way will your email address or the organization be linked to your survey answers.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Some survey questions are sensitive in nature, so if you feel uncomfortable about any of the questions, you can feel free to skip those questions. There will be no penalty for skipping questions and will be awarded remuneration for completing the study regardless of questions answered/not answered.

The questionnaire will include identifying information (you and your spouse's birthdates and date of marriage) so that I can effectively link your questionnaire to your spouse's questionnaire. Again, I only ask for this information so I can link your answers to your spouse's answers. This identifying information will never be used in any published work, and no one except the researchers will be able to see this information.

The results of the questionnaire will be kept completely confidential in a secure database and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team, including your spouse. The results of the study will be used for a doctoral dissertation and may be used in presentations or publications. Only the combined results from all participants will be used and your individual data will never be singled out and no information about your identity will ever be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please feel free to contact me at: mframer@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this

research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965-6788. You may also contact my doctoral advisors Dr. Jonathan Pettigrew at: jonathan.pettigrew@asu.edu or 480-727-4299 or Dr. Anthony Roberto at: Anthony.roberto@asu.edu or 480.965.4111.

Filling out and submitting this questionnaire will be considered as signifying your consent to participate.

Sincerely,
Melissa Framer Black, MA
Jonathan Pettigrew, PhD
Anthony Roberto, PhD
Marilyn Thompson, PhD

APPENDIX F
MEAN DIFFERENCES

Mean Differences Among Wives

Variable	FP N / Mean/ SD	Non- FP N / Mean/ SD	<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Sequenced Bonferroni
Ideal Sexual Closeness	65 / 6.37 / .93	24 / 5.58 / 1.14	$t(87) = 3.329,$ $p = .001^{**}$	.757	.05/18 = .00277
Sexual Closeness	66 / 4.92 / 1.79	24 / 3.83 / 1.74	$t(88) = 2.584,$ $p = .011^*$	.619	.05/17 = .00294
Ideal Closeness	65 / 6.25 / .94	24 / 5.75 / 1.11	$t(87) = 2.107,$ $p = .038^*$	.482	.05/16 = .003125
Self-Expansion	66 / 4.68 / .88	24 / 5.06 / .77	$t(88) = -1.869,$ $p = .065$	.459	.05/15 = .003333
Cues for Sexual Desire: Romance	66 / 3.52 / .81	24 / 3.19 / .87	$t(88) = 1.676,$ $p = .097$	.393	.05/14 = .00357
Sexual Satisfaction	66 / 4.25 / 1.48	24 / 3.72 / 1.22	$t(88) = 1.579,$ $p = .118$	.393	.05/13 = .003846
Sexual Closeness Discrepancy	65 / 1.38 / 1.58	24 / 1.88 / 1.60	$t(87) = -1.297,$ $p = .198$	.309	.05/12 = .00416
Relational Maintenance: Positivity	66 / 3.90 / .56	24 / 4.05 / .50	$t(88) = -1.133,$ $p = .260$	.277	.05/11 = .004545
IOS	66 / 5.49 / 1.65	24 / 5.09 / 1.67	$t(88) = 1.019,$ $p = .311$	.265	.05/10 = .005
Marital Satisfaction	66 / 33.42 / 34.42	24 / 34.42 / 5.85	$t(88) = -.728, p$ $= .348$	.172	.05/9 = .00555
Cues for Sexual Desire: Emotional Bonding	66 / 4.17 / .76	24 / 4.02 / .84	$t(88) = .789, p$ $= .432$	.178	.05/8 = .00625

Relational Maintenance: Verbal Affection	66 / 4.05 / 4.18	24 / 4.18 / .90	t(88) = -.594, <i>p</i> = .554	.139	.05/7 = .00714
Boredom	66 / 2.71 / 1.00	24 / 2.59 / .99	t(88) = .520, <i>p</i> = .605	.124	.05/6 = .00833
Closeness Discrepancy	65 / .80 / 1.20	24 / .66 / 1.20	t(87) = .464, <i>p</i> = .644	.111	.05/5 = .01
Relational Maintenance: Openness	66 / 4.04 / .72	24 / 3.99 / .75	t(88) = .298, <i>p</i> = .766	.073	.05/4 = .0125
Relational Maintenance: Assurances	66 / 4.05 / .60	24 / 4.54 / .588	t(88) = -.239, <i>p</i> = .811	.057	.05/3 = .0166667
Cues for Sexual Desire: Erotic	66 / 3.71 / .88	24 / 3.74 / .92	t(88) = -.154, <i>p</i> = .878	.036	.05/2 = .025
Relational Maintenance: Physical Affection	66 / 4.00 / .93	24 / 3.97 / 1.00	t(88) = .121, <i>p</i> = .904	.028	.05/1 = .05

Note. Cohen's D effect size small (0.2), medium (0.5), and large (0.8). ** P-values are significant at the corrected sequenced Bonferroni p-value. * Variables meet p-value at .05.

Mean Differences Among Husbands

Variable	FP N /Means / SD	Non- FP N / Means / SD	<i>t</i>	<i>Cohen's</i> <i>D</i>	Sequenced Bonferroni
Current Sexual IOS	65 / 5.09 / 1.73	24 /4.00 / 1.91	$t(87) = 2.570, p = .012^*$	.599	.05/18 = .00277
Relational Maintenance: Positivity	66 / 3.91 / .57	24 /4.23 / .50	$t(88) = -2.427, p = .017^*$	.596	.05/17 = .00294
Sexual IOS Discrepancy	64 / 1.31 / 1.64	24 /2.25 / 1.82	$t(86) = -2.315, p = .023^*$	.540	.05/16 = .003125
Self- Expansion	66 / 4.60 / .82	24 / 5.03 / .80	$t(87) = -2.189, p = .031^*$	.533	.05/15 = .003333
Sexual Satisfaction	66 / 4.38 / 1.25	24 / 3.84 / 1.29	$t(88) = 1.807, p = .074$	.427	.05/14 = .00357
Cues for Sexual Desire: Erotic	65 / 3.98 / .79	24 / 4.24 / .91	$t(87) = -1.319, p = .191$	.306	.05/13 = .003846
Relational Maintenance: Verbal Affection	66 / 3.65 / .97	24 / 3.94 / 1.01	$t(88) = -1.241, p = .218$	.292	.05/12 = .00416
Cues for Sexual Desire: Romance	65 / 3.47 / .75	24 /3.67 / .92	$t(87) = -1.045, p = .299$	.238	.05/11 = .004545
Relational Maintenance: Openness	66 / 3.28 / .93	24 / 3.48 / .89	$t(88) = -.914, p = .363$	.220	.05/10 = .005
Marital Satisfaction	66 / 33.15 / 4.91	24 / 34.13 / 5.08	$t(88) = -.823, p = .413$	.195	.05/9 = .00555

Boredom	66 / 2.75 / .91	24 / 2.62 / 1.00	t(88) = .575, <i>p</i> = .567	.082	.05/8 = .00625
Ideal Sexual IOS	64 / 6.39 / .99	24 / 6.25 / 1.33	t(86) = .540, <i>p</i> = .590	.121	.05/7 = .00714
Cues for Sexual Desire: Emotional Bonding	66 / 3.87 / .81	24 / 3.77 / .88	t(88) = .525, <i>p</i> = .601	.123	.05/6 = .00833
Relational Maintenance: Physical Affection	66 / 3.93 / .94	24 / 4.03 / 1.06	t(88) = -.417, <i>p</i> = .677	.097	.05/5 = .01
Current IOS	65 / 5.31 / 1.48	24 / 5.42 / 1.59	t(87) = -.303, <i>p</i> = .763	.071	.05/4 = .0125
Relational Maintenance: Assurances	66 / 4.32 / .66	24 / 4.34 / .63	t(88) = -.165, <i>p</i> = .869	.039	.05/3 = .0166667
Ideal IOS	65 / 6.25 / 1.03	24 / 6.21 / 1.02	t(87) = .154, <i>p</i> = .878	.037	.05/2 = .025
IOS Discrepancy	64 / 1.00 / 1.26	24 / .96 / 1.40	t(86) = .134, <i>p</i> = .894	.031	.05/1 = .05

Note. Cohen's D effect size small (0.2), medium (0.5), and large (0.8). ** P-values are significant at the corrected sequenced Bonferroni p-value. * Variables meet p-value at .05.

APPENDIX G
CORRELATION TABLES

Correlations between Husband and Wife Scores on IOS, Ideal IOS, IOS Discrepancy, Sexual IOS, Ideal Sexual IOS, Sexual IOS Discrepancy, Marital Satisfaction, Sexual Satisfaction, Emotional Bonding Cues for Sexual Desire, Erotic Cues for Sexual Desire, Romantic Cues for Sexual Desire, Self-Expansion, and Boredom (N = 90 dyads). Correlation tables have been broken down into separate tables for readability purposes.

Husbands' scores are indicated on the vertical left side of the table

Wives' scores are indicated on the horizontal top side of the table

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. IOS	<u>.59***</u>	.36**	.49**	.35**	.29**	.25*	.45***	.18	-.1	.07	-.08	.16	-.34**
2. Ideal IOS	.12	<u>.25*</u>	.02	.01	.12	.06	.05	-.05	.12	-.08	-.02	-.11	.05
3. IOS Discrepancy	.53***	-.20	<u>.56***</u>	-.43***	-.20	.38***	-.45***	-.32**	.20	-.10	.05	-.28**	.41
4. Sexual IOS	.40***	.35**	.25*	<u>.67***</u>	.43**	.50***	.27*	.48***	.02	.16	.07	.12	-.25*
5. Ideal Sexual IOS	.02	.26*	.15	.12	<u>.36**</u>	.12	-.01	-.05	.07	-.17	-.05	.01	.08
6. Sexual IOS Discrepancy	-	-.21*	.38***	-.63***	-.24*	<u>.59***</u>	-.30**	-.54***	.03	-.27*	-.11	-.13	.33**
7. Marital Satisfaction	.48***	.15	-	.30**	.12	-.28**	<u>.61***</u>	.34**	-.14	.04	-.04	.33**	-.60***
8. Sex Satisfaction	.27**	.05	-.36**	.58***	.15	-	.41***	<u>.71***</u>	.03	.33**	.20	.28**	-.54***
9. Emotional Bonding Cues for Sexual Desire	.20	.13	-.17	.02	.02	-.01	.11	-.05	<u>.10</u>	-.08	-.02	-.03	-.14
10. Erotic Cues for Sexual Desire	.13	.17	-.05	.23*	.04	-.23*	.16	.33**	.11	<u>.00</u>	.02	.11	-.28**
11. Romantic Cues for Sexual Desire	.24*	.24*	-.15	.06	-.05	-.10	.11	.10	.10	-.10	<u>.05</u>	-.01	-.17
12. Self-Expansion	.40***	.07	-	.15	-.01	-.23*	.53***	.22*	.02	.19	.09	<u>.40***</u>	-.60***
13. Boredom	-.35**	-.08	.44***	-.29**	-.05	.33**	-.47***	-.37***	-.06	-.05	-.05	-.27*	<u>.62***</u>

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Underlined correlation coefficients represent correlation coefficients between husband and wife dyadic partners on the same continuous variable.

Correlations between Husband and Wife Scores on Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Physical Affection, Verbal Affection, Emotional Bonding Cues for Sexual Desire, Erotic Cues for Sexual Desire, and Romantic Cues for Sexual Desire (N = 90 dyads)

Husbands' scores are indicated on the vertical left side of the table

Wives' scores are indicated on the horizontal top side of the table

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Positivity	<u>.22*</u>	.19	.17	.28**	.23**	-.05	.03	-.10
2. Assurances	.15	<u>.31**</u>	.18	.22*	.20	.04	.06	.01
3. Openness	.10	.16	<u>.20</u>	.26*	.13	-.03	.11	-.13
4. Physical Affection	.22*	.50***	.25*	<u>.64***</u>	.45***	.10	.10	.04
5. Verbal Affection	.04	.37***	.37***	.44***	<u>.50***</u>	.05	.02	-.10
6. Emotional Bonding Sexual Desire	.05	.07	.05	.10	.05	<u>.10</u>	-.08	-.02
7. Erotic Sexual Desire	.04	-.10	-.07	.20	.02	.11	<u>.00</u>	.02
8. Romantic Sexual Desire	.04	-.06	-.05	.11	.03	.10	-.10	<u>.05</u>

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Underlined correlation coefficients represent correlation coefficients between husband and wife dyadic partners on the same continuous variable.

Correlations between Husband and Wife Scores on IOS, Ideal IOS, IOS Discrepancy, Sexual IOS, Ideal Sexual IOS, Sexual IOS Discrepancy, Marital Satisfaction, Sexual Satisfaction, Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Physical Affection, and Verbal Affection (N = 90 dyads)
Husbands' scores are indicated on the vertical left side of the table
Wives' scores are indicated on the horizontal top side of the table

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. IOS	<u>.59***</u>	.36**	.49**	.35**	.29**	.25*	.45***	.18	.26*	.13	.04	.30**	.19
2. Ideal IOS	.12	<u>.25*</u>	.02	.01	.12	.06	.05	-.05	.11	.05	.01	-.03	.08
3. IOS Discrepancy	.53***	-.20	<u>.56***</u>	-	-.20	.38***	-.45***	-.32**	-.20	-.09	.02	-.36**	-.12
4. Sexual IOS	.40***	.35**	.25*	<u>.67***</u>	.43**	.50***	.27*	.48***	.26*	.18	.14	.29**	.20
5. Ideal Sexual IOS	.02	.26*	.15	.12	<u>.36**</u>	.12	-.01	-.05	.11	.03	.18	-.08	.08
6. Sexual IOS Discrepancy	-	-.21*	.38***	-	-.24*	<u>.59***</u>	-.30**	-	-.21	-.19	-.04	-.36**	-.17
7. Marital Satisfaction	.48***	.15	-.55***	.30**	.12	-.28**	<u>.61***</u>	.34**	.38***	.28**	.09	.33**	.25*
8. Sex Satisfaction	.27**	.05	-.36**	.58***	.15	-	.41***	<u>.71***</u>	.40***	.31**	.16	.46***	.40**
9. Positivity	.37***	.17	-.41***	.15	.09	-.13	.44***	.18	<u>.22*</u>	.19	.17	.28**	.23**
10. Assurances	.34**	.15	-.37**	.12	.06	-.12	.34**	.14	.15	<u>.31**</u>	.18	.22*	.20
11. Openness	.17	.01	-.25*	-.00	-.09	-.09	.21	.11	.10	.16	<u>.20</u>	.26*	.13
12. Physical Affection	.36**	.19	-.35**	.28**	.17	-.23*	.28**	.20	.22*	.50***	.25*	<u>.64***</u>	.45***
13. Verbal Affection	.33**	.16	-.34**	.10	-.02	-.17	.27**	.08	.04	.37***	.37***	.44***	<u>.50***</u>

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Underlined correlation coefficients represent correlation coefficients between husband and wife dyadic partners on the same continuous variable

Correlations between Husband and Wife Scores on Sexual Satisfaction, Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Physical Affection, Verbal Affection, Self-Expansion, and Boredom (N = 90 dyads)
 Husbands' scores are indicated on the vertical left side of the table
 Wives' scores are indicated on the horizontal top side of the table

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Positivity	<u>.22*</u>	.19	.17	.28**	.23**	.21*	-.45***
2. Assurances	.15	<u>.31**</u>	.18	.22*	.20	.08	-.38***
3. Openness	.10	.16	<u>.20</u>	.26*	.13	.12	-.31**
4. Physical Affection	.22*	.50***	.25*	<u>.64***</u>	.45***	.21*	-.41***
5. Verbal Affection	.04	.37***	.37***	.44***	<u>.50***</u>	.17	-.41***
6. Self-Expansion	.37***	.35**	.18	.30**	.28**	<u>.40***</u>	-.60***
7. Boredom	-.31**	-.25*	-.18	-.37**	-.37***	-.27*	<u>.62***</u>

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Underlined correlation coefficients represent correlation coefficients between husband and wife dyadic partners on the same continuous variable.

Correlations Among All Husbands (N = 90)

Variable	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1.IOS	.463	-.698**	.521**	.177	-.443**	.436**	.262*	.362**	.242*	.248*	.117	.222*	.239*	-.386*	.520**	.229*	.308**
2. Ideal IOS	--	.167	.283*	.625**	.086	.229*	.088	.182	.123	-.149	.202	.184	.183	-.068	.039	-.007	.015
3.IOS Discrepancy		--	-.471**	.221*	.638**	-.345**	.200	.205	.158	.345**	.038	.102	-.157	.425*	-.512**	.399**	.300**
4. Sexual IOS			---	.374**	-.828**	.232*	.180	.201	.154	.294**	.055	.157	.156	-.349*	.294**	.607**	.082
5. Ideal Sexual IOS				---	-.198	-.808	.054	.049	.099	.153	.026	.152	.075	-.033	-.036	-.038	.159
6. Sexual IOS Discrepancy					---	-.199	.251*	-.202	.227*	.426**	.055	.072	-.127	.369*	.351**	.675**	.198
7. Positivity						---	.495**	.552**	.517**	.350**	.253*	.300**	.424*	-.478*	.509**	.178	.533**
8. Openness							---	.535**	.480**	.389**	.221*	.087	.231*	-.282*	.209*	.138	.348**
9. Assurances								---	.583**	.497**	.431**	.194	.382*	-.527*	.515**	.242*	.571**
10. Verbal Affection									---	.630**	.430**	.090	.346*	-.460*	.340**	.186	.540**
11. Physical Affection										---	.301**	.058	.193	-.428*	.396**	.412**	.408**
12. Emotional Sexual Desire											---	.055	.543**	-.329*	.257*	.091	.281**
13. Erotic Sexual Desire												---	.469*	-.298*	.357**	.199	.124
14. Romantic Sexual Desire													---	-.280*	.238*	.044	.214*
15. Boredom														---	-.701**	.535**	.695**
16. marital satisfaction															---	.487**	.703**
17. Sexual satisfaction																---	.370**
18. Self Expansion																	---

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Correlations Among All Wives (N = 90)

Variable	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1.IOS	-	-	.534	.391	-	.239	.058	.311*	.342	.520	.047	.107	.014	-.584*	.689	.384	.374**
	.677	.790	**	**	.398	*		*	**	**				*	**	**	
2. Ideal IOS	---	-	.410	.579	-	.219	.150	.259*	.281	.424	.194	-	.142	-.295*	.341	.223	.212*
		.119	**	***	.151	*		*	*	*		.057		*	*	*	
3.IOS Discrepancy		---	-	-.423	-	-	-	-.219*	--	--	.089	-	.117	-.588*	.678	-	-.366**
			.396	.043	**	.150	.101	.219*	.232	.394		.152		*	**	**	.363
			**						*	**				*	**	**	**
4. Sexual IOS			---	.505	-	.240	.140	.187	.307	.458	.246	.240	.293	-.426*	.400	.756	.306**
				**	.828	*			**	**	*	*	**	*	**	**	**
5.Ideal Sexual IOS				---	.019	.290	.161	.153	.256	.407	.128	.114	.266	-.261*	.291	.150	.290*
					*	*			*	**			*	*	*		
6.Sexual IOS Discrepancy					---	-	-	-.126	-	-	-	-	-	.373*	-	-	-.194
						.103	.075		.209	.229	.210	.198	.171	*	.273	.750	**
						*			*	*	*	*	*	*	**	**	**
7.Positivity						---	.387	.387*	.364	.364		.295	.253	-.458*	.402	.283	.520**
							**	*	**	**	.201	**	*	*	**	**	**
							*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*
8.Openness							---	.517*	.541	.322	.301	.280	.282	-.211*	.110	.118	.228*
								*	**	**	**	**	**	*			*
9.Assurances								---	.577	.466	.252	.163	.179	-.436*	.393	.246	.382**
									**	**	*			*	*	*	*
									*	*	*			*	*	*	*
10.Verbal Affecti on									---	.672	.241	.163	.095	-.488*	.347	.272	.336*
										**	*			*	**	**	*
										*				*	*	*	*
11.Physical Affecti on										---	.206	.228	.188	-.645*	.477	.434	.438**
											*	*	*	*	**	**	*
														*	*	*	*
12.Emotional Sexual Desire											---	.328	.585	-.163	.034	.256	.178
												**	**	*	*	*	*
13.Erotic Sexual Desire												---	.596	-.327*	.251	.323	.332**
													**	*	*	**	*
14.Romantic Sexual Desire													---	-.158	.059	.322	.149
														*	**	**	*
15.Boredom														---	-	-	-.742**
															.782	.542	*
															**	**	**
16.Marital Satisfac tion															---	.443	.639**
																*	*
17. sexual Satisfac tion																---	.344**
18. Self-Expans ion																	---

Note. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$