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**PORTFOLIO FOR PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE
IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY (DPSYCH)**

**The Importance of Healthy Relationships and
Empowerment Within Them**

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City, University of London Declaration

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Preface

This doctoral portfolio represents my journey towards becoming a counselling psychologist. The portfolio contains three sections, each representing a different aspect of my training: a research project, a publishable paper and last, a client study. The link between these three parts of the training is the importance of empathy and relationships in my journey as a counselling psychologist. This portfolio shows how my interest in counselling psychology has developed, together with the clinical knowledge gained throughout my training, during which, through learning and practice, it was the importance of both empathy and the therapeutic relationship that made me the practitioner I am today.

I started my doctoral research five years ago, a year after starting my first job as a key worker within the field of psychology. It was this job, in this particular charity, which truly encouraged me to begin my journey. Throughout my counselling psychology journey, although at times it was extremely difficult, I stayed within this job, as it was here that I felt my roots were truly grounded. From these roots, I felt the encouragement and motivation to branch off and learn how different aspects of counselling psychology could enhance the help I was able to give to the most vulnerable people in my community. I feel each branch represents another area of my identity as a counselling psychologist, feeding back into the work I am still doing today for this charity. The skills I learnt throughout my journey have noticeably enhanced the work I continue to do there today.

The first section of my doctoral portfolio constitutes a piece of qualitative research that seeks to explore Jewish women's experience of observing family purity laws within the first five years of their marriage. The second part consists of a clinical case study that illustrates how a strong relationship, created through the therapist's unconditional positive regard and empathy, can create the environment needed for the client to grow. The final part of my portfolio consists of a journal article, inspired by my first ever client at the beginning of my journey with the charity. All three pieces of work differ markedly from each other; however, a common thread binds them together to give this portfolio a consistent focus. All of them explore the importance of relationships and empathy and how these can stimulate growth. The difference between the three sections of the portfolio, is that the doctoral research uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the clinical case study uses the Person Centred Framework, while the publishable article analyses the relationship behind Dialectical Behavioural Therapy. This encompasses a range of approaches and showcases the breadth of my experience and knowledge I have gained over the last five years.

Part A: Doctoral Research

The research study, the main part of the doctoral portfolio, aims to explore the lived experience of Orthodox Jewish women observing family purity laws within the first five years of their marriage, and the meaning they attach to their experiences. The study also looks at these women's feelings about the implications of these rules for their own experiences. The data-collection method used was semi-structured interviews; this was followed by IPA to identify and analyse emergent themes. IPA was chosen as it seeks to understand the participant's subjective experiences in relation to their life, and further explores how that participant makes sense of their experience. Finally, the findings, implications and limitations, together with the study's contribution to counselling psychology, were discussed in light of existing literature.

Part B: Clinical Case study

The clinical case study comprises a short piece of work I undertook with my client ('Anna'), a patient at a GP practice that offered a maximum of 6 sessions each to clients who might benefit from therapy. Anna's reason for attending therapy was to make sense of strong feelings that she was experiencing but failing to understand. Anna had decided to stop speaking to her mother; however, this resulted in strong feelings of loss and confusion. Anna also felt she was often pushed aside by others and sought more control over her own life. Given Anna's presenting problems and current difficulties, Person Centred Therapy seemed appropriate, as it would allow me to create a safe relationship with her through empathy and unconditional positive regard. I hoped that through this safe relationship, Anna would feel comfortable to open up and challenge her thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and I wanted to help Anna develop conditions of worth and feel able to assert her own needs, unburdened by guilt. Anna had expressed a desire to self-actualise, and I believed this could be achieved through a deep, meaningful and empathic relationship, showing full unconditional positive regard to her. I chose to present this work with Anna as it highlights the progress Anna was able to make, as well as challenges I faced, during our short time together. This work was also chosen for presentation as it shows how change can occur through a meaningful and empathic relationship, a theme that links directly to my doctoral research. The case study taught me that a person-centred approach, focusing on a deep relationship created by empathy and unconditional positive regard, could help me refrain from judging Anna within my own frame of reference. This allowed me to demonstrate openness and acceptance of her story. I believe it was this work that allowed me to create a type of therapeutic relationship that was different from other types; it helped her to trust and open up to me, and gave me the opportunity to hear, accept and understand her.

Part C: Publishable Article

The publishable article is a critical review of literature in an area and the third link in my doctoral research, and, it is hoped, will be published in *The Counselling Psychology Review*. The article was selected for the research project as it emphasizes the importance of empathy and understanding within the therapeutic relationship. The journal was written from a DBT (Dialectical Behavioural Therapy) perspective on the recommendation of a girl with whom I was working at the charity mentioned above, and who was enrolled on a two-year DBT course. Learning about DBT on the course resonated deeply with me as I saw how the ethos and background of the therapeutic relationship could really help my client. I was able to take these principles, and as a key worker, without undertaking therapy with my client, use them to shape the relationship I was building with her. The journal welcomes readers who are interested not only in DBT but also in building a relationship that can promote mutual change (Robins & Koons, 2000; Swales & Heard, 2007). The aim is to help the client change their behaviours while simultaneously showing them unconditional acceptance. This can be achieved through validating the client and helping them to genuinely accept themselves for who they are, but at the same time promoting change. In this way, it is hoped that the client will build a trusting relationship and feel they are being heard and validated. While the doctoral research is focused on counselling psychology, I believe this article can help practitioners from a wide range of disciplinary fields who have an interest in promoting change in their clients through a strong trusting relationship. This section of my thesis, the publishable article is dedicated to the memory of my client, who has since passed away.

A note on the terms used in the portfolio

The terms “Counselling Psychologist”, “therapist”, “psychologist” and “clinician” are used interchangeably throughout this portfolio. All names and identifying details of all participants who volunteered for this research study have also been changed to preserve anonymity.

Part A: Doctoral Research

An Exploration of Women's Experiences Adhering to Family

Purity Laws Within the First Five Years of Marriage

Supervisors

Dr. Don Rawson

&

Dr. Jacqui Farrants

Abstract

The psychological impact of Jewish family purity laws is under-researched, particularly within the United Kingdom. This study gives women who observe these rules an opportunity to be heard, and contributes to the multicultural literature enhancing counselling psychologists' understanding of ethnic minorities. The study explores in depth the experiences of women who observe Jewish family purity laws. Through a qualitative research design, the study aims to elucidate the deep meaning of the women's experiences and the implications for their current lives, so that they can be supported efficiently through counselling psychology. The data was collected from eight observant orthodox Jewish participants who had been married for between one and five years. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from the participants. This was followed by an analysis of the data using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The four superordinate themes that emerged from the data were: The Power of Dissonance, conveying feelings of anxiety, pressure and guilt while bound by these rules; The Emotional Juxtaposition, describing paradoxical feelings of monotony and excitement within their marital relationship; The Phenomenon of Relational Space, exploring paradoxical findings covering closeness, distance, invasion and space; and last, Desire for Attachment, referring to the desire for meaningful relationships with G-d and their spouses. Existing literature is drawn on to evaluate the findings, and the limitations of the study are outlined, together with the implications for research into, and clinical practice of counselling psychology. Emphasis is placed on the need to offer therapy that empowers clients to take control of their lives and make informed choices on the basis of their own decisions and desires, rather than those imposed on them by anything else. The study concludes with recommendations for future research.

¹ Throughout the thesis the term G-d will be written as so as a sign of respect following an interpretation of Deuteronomy 12:3-4 where it is written G-d's name should be avoided being written.

Chapter 1 - Introduction & Literature Review

1.1 Rationale for the study

When I first thought about conducting this research, my aim was to explore Orthodox Jewish women's experiences of observing family purity laws, and in particular, the impact of this observance on them and on their intimate relationships. The idea of this research was triggered by the curiosity and questions I often encountered from people around me wanting to know more about my experience of keeping these laws. The more questions I was asked, the more I realised there was very little knowledge of women's experiences of observing these laws and how they could transform one's identity and relationship. After extensive research, I found that very little attention had been paid to recently married Orthodox Jewish women's experiences of keeping family purity laws. I felt my research would offer such women a rare opportunity to reflect on, and open up about, their experiences. The experience and impact of observing family purity laws on themselves and their relationships is under-researched, particularly in the United Kingdom. It therefore seemed really important to create awareness of this experience by allowing these hitherto unheard women a voice. This research would also add to the multicultural literature resources of counselling psychologists, enhancing their understanding of ethnic minorities.

1.2 Multicultural interest and importance of understanding

Over the last four decades there has been a strong focus in psychological literature on developing multicultural counselling competencies in order to increase the effectiveness of therapeutic practice (Arredondo & Toporek, 2004; Marsella & Pedersen, 2004). Counselling psychologists are required to identify and develop personal competences based on their knowledge and understanding of diverse contexts and clients (Collins & Arthur, 2010). Counselling Psychology has been criticized for being discriminatory, thereby alienating ethnic minority groups (Hayes and McLeod, 2014). Counselling psychologists working with clients from an ethnic minority background need to be aware of this history of scepticism and reservation. To tackle this, in the last two decades attention has increasingly focused on multicultural training for counsellors (Monk et al., 2008). Much literature has addressed the skills required for multicultural counselling practice (Sue et al., 1992; Sue et al., 1982; Sue et al., 1998) in, for example, the *Counselling Psychologist*, the *Journal for Counseling and Development* and the *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* and the American Counselling Association (Sue et al., 1992; see Collins & Arthur, 2010, for a detailed account of multicultural competencies).

Most of the multicultural counselling literature emanates from America and might have limited applicability to cultures outside that context (Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996; Sue & Sue, 1999). Furthermore, this research has paid minimal attention to minority groups. Nelson-Jones (2002, p.133) notes: “Advocates of multicultural counselling and therapy assert that the Euro-American bias of mainstream therapy approaches causes Western-oriented therapists to fail many of their actual and potential minority group clients”. As British counselling psychologists work in a diverse, multicultural environment, particularly in the major cities, there is a critical need to broaden the multicultural counselling literature in the UK to maximize their understanding of their clients and offer them the optimum treatment and support. This study therefore seeks to add to the limited research on multicultural counselling psychology relating to minority groups in the UK, thereby promoting “understanding the worldview of the culturally different client” (Sue et al., 1992, p. 481). The study is consistent with the foundations of counselling psychology in that it emphasizes the significance of understanding subjective experience within a particular context and will therefore highlight the importance of counselling psychologists taking into account their clients’ beliefs and values, rather than simply applying all-purpose, “one-size-fits-all” treatments. As Kareem notes, “A psychotherapeutic process that does not take into account the person’s whole life experience, or that denies consideration of their race, culture, gender or social values, can only fragment the person” (1992, p.16).

Even within this already limited literature, there has been very little research into the Jewish population, not only in the UK but worldwide (Fischer & Moradi, 2001). The literature on counselling psychology has very little on the practice of Judaism and how interventions could be adapted to suit the therapeutic needs of observant Jewish clients. A research base is crucial for enabling counselling psychologists to enhance their multicultural competencies in order to offer Jewish clients treatment that aligns with their practices and beliefs. A client’s religious beliefs are as integral to their identity as their family structures and relationships (Payne, Bergin, & Loftus, 1992). It has been suggested that the benefits of therapy may be restricted if the therapist does not take religious values into account in their therapeutic practice (Bergin, 1980; Cunningham, 1983; Gass, 1984; Kuyken, Brewin, Power, & Furnham, 1992). Although there are some studies of women and menstruation, very little of this research deals specifically with the issue as it pertains to Jewish women’s psychological experiences. The gap in the research suggests that treatment interventions may not be taking clients’ values, beliefs and practice into account, reflecting the lack of therapeutic attention received by women who adhere to religious purity laws. I therefore hope that this research will offer psychologists the understanding to adapt their therapy in such a way as to optimize their understanding of women who observe Jewish laws of ritual purity, and to adapt their treatment approaches accordingly. I hope also to give a voice to these women and present an account of how observance may impact their lives and their relationships.

As a trainee counselling psychologist, I conducted this research to enhance the knowledge and understanding of clinicians and professionals of the potential impact on Orthodox Jewish women of observing family purity laws. I hope that this enhanced understanding will enable clinicians to adapt their skillset to maximize their support of observant Jewish women.

1.3 Aims of the thesis

I hope this research will offer insight into the ways strict rules surrounding the conduct of husbands and wives towards each other defines and impacts Orthodox Jewish women's experience of the early stages of marriage. The literature on Jewish family purity is limited, and I hope to fill the current gap on this issue by throwing light on hitherto un-researched areas. In addition, I aim to enhance our understanding of women's experiences of observing family purity laws within one particular culture. My research aims to look beyond debates on feminism and sociology (Hartman & Marmon, 2004; Marmon, 1999, 2008) and probe deeper than previous qualitative studies, such as that of Labinsky et al. (2009) who researched the attitudes of women keeping family purity laws and how it impacted their physical satisfaction.

Although each woman's experience is unique and subjective, their accounts can collectively suggest ways these women can be supported through counselling psychology. Regardless of her experiences in keeping these laws, if a religious woman seeks counselling for any reason, the therapist would benefit from a deep understanding of her life and relational practices, since family relationships are integral to identity.

Given the importance of the marital relationship for the psychological health of not only the individual but also the relationship, this study will not only shed light on women's experiences of adhering to laws of family purity, but also on the ways observance can impact the marital relationship. This could help develop therapeutic interventions that are culturally sensitive to couples that follow such practices.

Although these findings are not generalizable beyond the participants of the study, they have important transcultural implications for therapy, including marital therapy for couples who observe similar rules and regulations. The study emphasises the importance of understanding varied marital practices and of devising different psychological interventions to match the cultural needs of each client.

This study focusses exclusively on women in mixed-sex relationships because the Jewish religion forbids same-sex relationships. A religious same-sex couple would therefore be anomalous.

Accordingly, I have confined my reading to literature on mixed-sex relationships. There is a wealth of research on mixed-sex, same-sex, and inter-racial relationships but this is not covered in my literature review as it is irrelevant to the focus of my research. I also chose to focus my research exclusively on psychological and therapeutic studies relating to family purity laws in relation to Orthodox Jewish women as this is the most relevant to my research topic. My reading focused strongly on literature about the marital emotional and sexual relationship around menstruation, the central focus of my own research. I selected relevant literature through sifting standard literature search terms, including 'family purity laws', 'orthodox experiences in family purity laws', 'orthodox laws', 'attachment and relationship satisfaction', 'orthodox women's experiences in keeping laws', 'women and religion', 'women and sexuality', 'women's experiences of menstruation', 'multicultural counseling psychology', 'sexual attitudes', 'sexual and marital satisfaction', 'emotional and sexual relationships', 'religion and marital satisfaction', 'marital influences on satisfaction', and 'Orthodox Judaism menstruation'. Further searches were conducted in which the above phrases were used alongside Boolean operators 'OR', 'AND', together with phrases such as 'counselling psychology', 'clinical psychology' and 'psychotherapy'. The databases used to search the relevant literature included the City, University of London Database (16 underlying databases in relation to psychology), PsycARTICLES and PsycINFO. No specific date range was excluded. While conducting this literature search I also ticked the psychology box to ensure that the literature produced fell under the heading of 'psychology'. No literature was excluded on grounds of date.

I will begin by explaining why multicultural competency and understanding are so important in counselling psychology and proceed with a detailed explanation of the structures and rationale of Jewish family purity law. I will then discuss the relationship between attachment theory and adult relationships; this will be followed by an account of the impact of attitudes to sex and the moderators between sexual and marital satisfaction. I then discuss the importance of emotional and sexual intimacy and how marital beliefs influence the marital relationship. I also review predictors of marital satisfaction within a religious context, followed by religious approaches to menstruation. Finally, I introduce research studies directly link to family purity laws. At the beginning of each topic I explain my reasons for addressing each issue, and I conclude by outlining my rationale for conducting the study, and its relevance to counseling psychology.

1.4 Counselling psychology and multicultural competencies

Counselling psychology requires both an understanding of the client's worldview, and awareness why they are seeking help (Pare, 2013). This includes awareness of the background the client's unique cultural identity, ignoring which can result in harm to the client (Sinacore et al., 2011). The counsellor's own worldview and cultural identity can influence the counselling relationship as well as

the process (Collins & Arthur, 2010). Culture is now much better recognized as integral to the counselling process, and counselling training has evolved to help students think critically about personal culture and biases, including awareness of how culture can influence clients. This awareness highlights how clients' problems may stem from socio-political or socio-economic forces and it is therefore critical to address social barriers when devising interventions (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Moodley, 2007).

Tripartite models (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Sue, 1991; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) are guidelines created to help accommodate the cultural difficulties of clients and counsellors. These models include three cross-cultural competencies: awareness of personal culture, awareness of others' culture, and understanding cultural influences within the counselling relationship and process (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Sue, 1991). This understanding entails not only awareness of cultures but how to address their potential effects on clients (Sinacore et al., 2011). Arguably, however, there is no difference between multicultural understanding and ability and professional ability as every client-therapist relationship involves some sort of multicultural encounter.

1.5 Importance of understanding cultures/religions within therapeutic counselling

Over the last few decades, counselling psychology has paid more attention to religion and spirituality. Although historically there has been conflict over how this knowledge can translate into effective practice (Ellis, 1980, 2012), an attempt has been made to reconcile divisions through competency development (Vieten et al., 2013) and respect for religion (Barnett & Johnson, 2011). Due to potential religious differences between therapists and clients, the concern to develop competency in religious understanding for clinical practice among mental health professionals is understandable. Religion is a key component of identity, values and worldview for many clients and therapists. This is shown through the way clients seek help, their commitment to mental-health care (Chadda, Agarwal, Singh, & Raheja, 2001) and therapists' preferences for therapeutic interventions (Stanley et al., 2011). All these considerations impact therapists' chosen therapeutic interventions (Stanley et al., 2011).

Attention is currently focused on developing competency for clinicians in this area (Hathaway, 2013), but there is no framework for addressing religious content within clinical practice (Vieten et al., 2013). Therapists may also encounter many ethical dilemmas (Gonsiorek, Richards, Pargament, & McMinn, 2009; Plante, 2007). Therapists should meet and respect their religious clients' needs in order to strengthen the therapeutic bond, to foster the collaborative nature of therapy, and encourage the client's commitment to mental-health support (McLeod, 2012). I therefore argue that in order to meet, respect and understand their clients' religious needs and optimize client growth, therapists need a good cultural competency. However, Fuertes et al, (2006) observe that ethnic minority clients

judged their therapists to be higher in multicultural competency if they rated high on therapeutic alliance and empathy. The two may therefore be linked; rather than focusing on cultural education, therapists might do better to have training in traditional areas including relationship building and communicating empathy. However, Fuertes et al (2006) do believe therapists should be able to handle clients' cultural concerns. Patterson (2004) adds that although we live in a multicultural society, mental-health professionals should be required to have different practice approaches for different groups; professionals should have a strong enough basis to be able to treat a wide variety of clients. Patterson (2004) therefore endorses Rogers' (1957) client-centred therapy, which is based on the principle of unconditional regard for the client.

Psychotherapy has been claimed to be an effective mode of treatment for anxiety and depression (de Maat et al. 2007; Otto et al. 2004) but reviews show only 50% of clients show reduction in clinical symptoms (Westen and Morrison 2001). It also has a significant attrition rate of between 15% and over 30% (de Mello et al. 2005; Westen and Morrison 2001). This suggests that psychotherapeutic techniques need improvement. However, this hypothesis is based on the assumption that no one will drop out if the therapy is excellent; in reality, there could be other reasons for dropping out or for therapy not working, such as unrealistic client expectations or impatience at the slow rate of progress.

Devising treatments that are more meaningful and relevant to clients' life goals (Hopko et al. 2005) may enhance treatment acceptability (Alvidrez et al. 2005), retention (Hopwood et al. 2007), and effectiveness (Sotsky et al. 1991). Life goals for many people include religious fulfilment; an American study found 93% of respondents believe in a higher power, 61% are members of a church or synagogue, and 59% believe religion can answer problems (Gallup Poll 2008). Integrating religion into psychotherapy - "religion-accommodative therapy" (McCullough 1999) - may be a way of adjusting treatment to religious clients' life goals and hopefully improving treatment outcomes.

Research into the interaction between religion and mental health has recently increased (Stefanek et al. 2005). Much research treats religion and spirituality as synonymous. However, there is an important difference: spirituality deals in one's relationship with a higher being while religion involves beliefs and behaviours shared with a community (Hodge, 2006). As spirituality differs from person to person, incorporating it into therapy is not easy (e.g., Simoni et al. 2007). Religion, which relates to communal beliefs and behaviours, is more easily defined and thus easier to research. The following studies therefore focus mostly on religion-accommodative therapy.

Greater religious involvement is associated with lower levels of depression and psychological distress (McCullough and Larson 1999; Wink and Scott 2005). The same correlation is found with anxiety (Tapanya et al. 1997; Van Ness and Larson 2002). Religion could protect against depression in the

face of stressors (Musick et al. 1998). It can also predict spontaneous improvement from depressive symptoms (Koenig et al. 1992; Pressman et al. 1990). As religion is so important in many people's lives and has a demonstrably positive impact on mental health, much research has looked into the efficacy of religion-accommodative therapy. Nevertheless, some aspects of spirituality and religiosity may be distressing. Good et al (2017) found that religion did not protect against non-suicidal self-injury, although they also didn't find it increased it either, perhaps suggesting that religion has neither a positive or negative impact on mental health. Conversely, recent studies show that religion may be detrimental to, or even have stress-exacerbating effects on, mental health (Ellison and Lee 2010; Krause and Wulff 2004; Lim 2015; Pargament et al. 2004; Uecker et al. 2015). Studies have found a negative correlation between religion and mental health: the more the religious the individual, the more negative the effect of religion on their mental health (e.g., Ellison et al. 2013). Studies are therefore ambivalent, with some finding a positive, and others a negative, relationship between religion and mental health.

Religion-accommodative therapies draw on cognitive behavioural therapy, modifying it to accommodate the client's spiritual worldview (Hodge, 2006). This type of therapy has been used in a wide range of settings and faith groups to address a spectrum of problems (Hodge, 2006). A meta-analysis of 31 studies found religion-accommodative therapy aids therapeutic outcomes and quality of life (Smith et al 2007). Hodge (2006) found religion-accommodative cognitive therapy a valid treatment for depression, directly contradicting the findings of an earlier meta-analysis study that did not find significant benefit in incorporating religion into therapy for depression (McCullough 1999). However, an empirically valid form of treatment doesn't need to show superiority; rather, it need only demonstrate equivalence or superiority to a placebo or treatment that lacks empirical validation. Additionally, it is not clear what incorporating religion into therapy means, apart from supporting clients' religious values and beliefs more than the standard method. Nor can we assume that all therapists apply this principle uniformly. Finally, this study involved only Christian clients and therefore can't be generalised to other religions

Although not all therapists are religious, many incorporate religious techniques into their psychotherapy (Walker et al 2004). There are indications that incorporating religious awareness into psychotherapy positively impacts some clients and inquiring about their religion may give therapists additional tools for treatment. Therapists are encouraged to increase their awareness of the relevant religion rather than wait for the client to raise the issue, as clients are often uncomfortable about bringing up religion in therapy (Meador and Koenig 2000). However, therapists who bring up religion are encouraged to be sensitive as some clients may want to separate their religion from their therapy.

However, although it could be valuable, it is unclear whether religion-accommodative therapy is

superior to other treatments. The abovementioned studies have not been systemically examined and they look at one disorder for example depression or a wide range of problems. Paukert et al. (2010) conducted a systemic review on the effect of religious-accommodative psychotherapy in treating clinical anxiety and depression in religious clients. This specific therapy was not found to be superior to other equivalent therapies, presumably because it is applicable only to religious clients. It is also possible that the therapists' beliefs may have impacted the effectiveness of the treatment, but this is not considered in the discussion. However, this therapy was more effective after completing treatment in comparison to wait-list control so it does not compare itself to other therapies, rather to no therapy. Other studies did find religion-accommodative therapy to reduce anxiety more than another form of psychotherapy (Azhar et al. 1994; Razeli et al. 1998, 2002) or as Paukert et al. (2010) found, a wait-list control (Bowland, 2008). These studies did not use equal control groups and some were conducted only on Muslim participants and can't be generalised. Two of these studies were below the mean quality needed for randomised trials recognised by Downs and Black (1998).

1.6 Setting the Scene – understanding family purity laws

The world's Jewish population was estimated at 14.41 million in 2016 (Sergio, 2016). 83% of Jews live in the United States and Israel (Sergio, 2016) with around 291,000 living in the United Kingdom, according to the Jewish Virtual Library in 2012. There are approximately 454 synagogues in the country and it is estimated that in 2016, 56.3% of houses with one or more Jewish residents were home to synagogue members (Mashiah & Boyd, 2017). Of these, 52.8% are affiliated to central orthodox organizations, including the United Synagogue, the Federations of Synagogues and independent orthodox synagogues. The strictly orthodox have been found to comprise 13.5% of the total Jewish population (Mashiah & Boyd, 2017). Liberal, Masorti and Reform sects make up the rest of the Jewish population, and treat the written law as subject to modernizing interpretation. Rabbinic law is based on the belief that G-d gave the Moses the written law (Torah) at Mount Sinai at Mount Sinai, and that this law is inviolable. The later 'oral' law consists of the interpretations of the written law developed in the Talmud by orthodox Jewish scholars. This oral law, also known as Rabbinic law, is intended to create a 'fence' around the Torah so that its rules will be correctly observed. For example, the Torah forbids sexual relations when wives are impure, and in order to prevent sexual relations, husband and wife are forbidden to touch each other. The laws were developed by the Rabbis to prevent a couple from violating the Torah law of uncleanness - Niddah (Eider, 1999). The prohibition against sexual relations is Biblical (Torah) law and the prohibition against touch is a Rabbinic law, which to most orthodox Jews has equal authority. Both Torah and Talmudic law have always been integral to orthodox Jewish life.

Among the strict rules governing orthodox Jewish daily life are the family purity laws regarding a married couple's sexual activity. Rabbinical law forbids sexual contact between married couples during the days of the wife's menstruation and the week after. In order to ensure strict observance of this rule, the Rabbis established various criteria for observance (Eider, 1999). The wife is forbidden to touch her husband, pass anything to him, share a bed or sit on a couch without anything between them. She also cannot undress in front of him, sing or do anything that could sexually entice her husband (Steinberg, 1997). The assumption of these patriarchal rules is that women are sexually dangerous, an ideology that finds little favour with modern women, reared in the empowering values of feminism. However, the rules apply also to men, who are required to be modestly attired in front of their wives, and are forbidden to do anything that could sexually entice them. One of the purposes of these laws is thought to be to prepare the couple for later life, when they will need to support each other but may not be able to do so through sexual relations.

In order to ensure that she is no longer bleeding vaginally, a woman is obligated to check herself with a white cloth, morning and night for the 7 days after her vaginal bleeding has stopped (Burt & Rudolph, 2000; Eider, 1999). These two weeks, the menstruating one and the one after, is known as Niddah, the Hebrew word for "unclean". Once the 7 days of checking are over and the wife sees there has been no vaginal bleeding for 7 subsequent days, she is obligated to immerse herself in the Mikvah, a ritual bath, at nightfall. First, however, Rabbinical law requires her to undergo a thorough and detailed cleaning process to ensure she has no foreign object on her body. The woman is required to clean herself thoroughly and immerse in the pool twice, once before saying the blessing and once after, under supervision by another female (Steinberg, 1997). This immersion, according to Rabbinical law makes the woman "clean"; she is no longer Niddah and is permitted to physically touch her husband. This ritual permission to touch a spouse for two weeks followed by two weeks prohibition is a key component of Jewish marital life and a fundamental part of the identity of an orthodox Jewish couple (Donin, 1972; Wasserfal, 1992). The only exceptions are during pregnancy and nursing, when there is normally no vaginal bleeding (Eider, 1999; Ribner, 2003). The Hebrew words 'tum'ah and tahara' are used interchangeably to mean both 'clean' and 'unclean' and 'pure' and 'impure'. Some believe these translations are inaccurate as they relate to a spiritual state rather than hygiene, but this ignores the metaphorical function of language, as, for example, in the expression 'a clean conscience'. The Hebrew terms can therefore have a simultaneous literal and metaphorical meaning. When women are not in niddah they are encouraged by Jewish tradition to engage in sexual relations and physical contact from the night they return home from the Mikvah.

Orthodox Jews are taught that these laws were instituted to enhance sexual interest following two weeks' separation, and to provide a challenge to marriage, thereby strengthening it. They are taught that unrestricted approachability can lead to over-indulgence, thence to boredom, triggering marital disharmony. Orthodox Jews believe adherence to the rules ensures sexual discipline and guarantees

that early love remains present within the marriage. The idea is that ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder’. Although my research will not attempt to prove or disprove this doctrine, it will offer a deep exploration into woman’s experiences and feelings towards these rules, adding to the multicultural awareness of counselling psychologists.

1.7 Attachment

Given this cyclical nature of orthodox marital relationships, the issue of childhood attachment or relationship attachment between orthodox couples is a potentially important factor to consider in the analysis of women’s experience of adherence to laws that appear disruptive to physical, if not emotional, attachment.

The psychoanalytic concept of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1944) characterizes the emotional bond between a child and its caregiver. This theory was first applied to parent-child relationships but later extended to adults. The idea that early interruption to the infant-caregiver relationship can trigger emotional difficulties (Bowlby, 1944) has implications for later-life relationships, as childhood attachment problems may set a pattern for later difficulties.

It has been suggested that the ability to create and keep a close relationship is crucial to happiness and physical health (Ho et al., 2012), while emotional and physical distress is associated with the inability to do so (Simpson and Rholes, 2010). Research has found that the experience of romantic relationships is affected by attachment orientation (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bowlby, 1973; Feeney, 1994; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1989; Levy & Davis, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988; Simpson, 1990). Insecure attachment has been found to take two forms: attachment avoidance (reflecting discomfort with dependence and intimacy) and attachment anxiety (reflecting fear of abandonment and rejection) (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). Insecurely attached individuals show vulnerability in stressful situations; anxiously attached participants make extravagant attempts to secure reassurance; attachment-avoidant participants underreact and seek independence, creating a distance and avoiding intimacy (Fraley et al., 2000; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). However, there is no literature exploring the links between these attachment styles and views about what people feel is important within a romantic relationship. For example, a securely attached individual might worry about being too close to a partner, while an insecurely attached individual may recognize intimacy as important within a relationship.

Within intimate relationships attachment avoidance and anxiety have been linked to certain tendencies (Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Unsurprisingly,

anxiously attached participants reported lower levels of trust (Arriaga, Kumashiro, Finkel, VanderDrift, & Luchies, 2014; Mikulincer, 1998) and seek increased intimacy and security (Mikulincer, 1998; Snapp, Lento, Ryu, & Rosen, 2014). Contrastingly, avoidant-attached individuals have an increased need for independence and self-focused goals (Arriaga et al., 2014). They have also been found to disengage in disclosure (Tan et al., 2012) and communicate less with their partners than those who are avoidant-attached (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012). Mikulincer & Shaver (2003) found anxiously attached individuals develop strategies to cope with their feelings of abandonment and rejection through behaviours that seek attention, care and reassurance. Contrastingly, avoidant-attached individuals seek to reduce attachment distress and therefore exaggeratedly distance themselves to gain independence and protect themselves from harm (Bretherton & Munholland, 2008; Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). All these studies were conducted on self-reported measures of attachment dimensions and are therefore not necessarily entirely reliable nor doesn't necessarily tell us what one perceives as important for a relationship. Attitudes towards a romantic relationship may or may not align with one's insecure tendency; much depends on the specifics of the relationship in question. Ren et al (2017) therefore used ranking measures to account for this and found that what participants thought important for a relationship was consistent with the above tendencies, with anxiously attached individuals exaggeratingly seek reassurance from their partner, whereas avoidant-attached individuals prefer independence. Another influence on relationships is attitude to sex, as discussed below.

1.8 Impact of attitudes to sex

As family purity laws regulate the marital sexual relationship, adherence to these laws may influence, and be influenced by, the individual's attitude towards sexual relations. I have therefore reviewed how these attitudes can impact sexual relationships. Research has found that attitudes can influence behaviour in complex ways. Attitudes can be both automatic (implicit), instinctive and unconscious, and controlled (explicit), conscious processes (Strack & Deutsch, 2004). Sexual experience can be important in explaining sexual attitudes and sexual satisfaction (DeLamater & Sill, 2005; Stephenson & Meston, 2010).

A considerable body of research has explored attitudes to sex. Men have been found to have a more explicit (conscious and controlled) attitude to sex than women (Petersen & Hyde, 2010). These explicit (conscious and controlled) attitudes are connected to their sexual desires (DeLamater & Sill, 2005; Fisher, White, Byrne, & Kelley, 1988). These studies are somewhat generalized as they are limited to the sample and based on self-constructed 'reports' which could be flawed by social desirability effects and/or impacted by memory bias (Alexander & Fisher, 2003). Although the study was conducted on a large sample, its findings are overgeneralized and do not draw crucial distinctions

between men and women. Participants were mainly White North Americans aged between 14 and 30, further limiting the generalizability of these findings.

Sexual satisfaction is positively correlated with frequency of orgasm, sexual intercourse, and oral sex. Those who have sex more often express greater satisfaction with their sexual relationships (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994). Christopher and Sprecher (2000) in a decade-wide research review concluded that frequency of sexual activity and sexual satisfaction both decrease over time, but that frequency of sex declines more sharply than sexual satisfaction. Consistency of orgasm could be a possible intervening variable between satisfaction and frequency of sex. Those expressing more sexual satisfaction were also found to orgasm more frequently (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997; Sprecher & Cate, 2004). But the “honeymoon effect” lasts for a comparatively short period (Call, Sprecher, & Schwartz, 1995), and is often followed by the “seven-year itch” for a new partner. This creates a distinction between passionate and companionate love. Experts attribute the transformation to the reduction of passion after the early, exciting days of love (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993). These ideas are rooted in Sternberg’s (1986) triangular theory of love, in which passion is quick and intense in the early stages of relationships and reduces just as quickly, resulting in relationships vulnerable to unravelling for those couples who fail to maintain intimacy as part of their relationship.

Sexual satisfaction has also been found to be linked to relationship satisfaction (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Sprecher, 2002). Research shows a positive correlation between sexual and relationship satisfaction (Byers, 2005). Those who enjoy sex more also have greater relationship satisfaction but those who work on their wider relationships may find their sexual satisfaction enhanced. One way to enhance sexual satisfaction is through constructive communication (MacNeil & Byers, 2005). Those who talk more about their sexual desires and are able to communicate them are generally more satisfied with their sexual relationships (Montesi, Fauber, Gordon, & Heimberg, 2010).

Dosch, Belayachi & Van der Linden (2016) studied a large sample of American couples who had been in a relationship for over three years. Most reported a gradual decline in sexual satisfaction and passion over time. This decrease in sexual passion is in line with the findings of other studies (Hatfield et al., 2008). However, the findings of Dosch et al. (2016) are at variance with those of Sternberg (1986), who found that passion quickly decreases. Dosch et al. (2016) found that if properly cherished, passion can stay alive for decades. These conflicting findings highlight the importance of placing findings in their wider context, and of considering the many other variables, such as health or socio-economic factors, that can directly impact sexual satisfaction. Both studies reported sexual satisfaction and desire on self-reported questionnaires and therefore could have desirability effects; just as people may significantly under-report their daily calorie intake, they are equally liable to

delude themselves about their alignment with what they consider normal or superior sexual activity. Additionally, those who volunteer to participate in research on sexual relationships may have a more liberal attitude towards sex than the general population (e.g., Wolchik, Braver & Jensen, 1985). The findings of the above studies are therefore not fully reliable.

Couples incorporate many behaviours into their sex lives, but the importance of those behaviours in enhancing sexual satisfaction is under-researched. In some cultures, kissing is an important part of arousal and enhancing feelings of closeness not only during, but before and after, sexual relations (Jankowiak, Volsche, & Garcia, 2015). Both males and females report increased sexual satisfaction when their sexual relations include frequent kissing, cuddling and touching (Heiman et al., 2011). Few studies, however, have explicitly considered after-play, although both men and women desire physically and emotionally affectionate behaviour after sexual activity (Hughes & Kruger, 2011; Muise, Giang, & Impett, 2014; van Anders, Edelman, Wade, & Samples-Steele, 2013). In orthodox Judaism, after-play may be problematic as a bride is officially “impure” after having sexual relations for the first time, as she will probably bleed after breaking her hymen.

The time spent on foreplay and sexual encounters matters for sexual satisfaction (Muise et al., 2014). More foreplay increases a woman’s likelihood of orgasm (Singh, Meyer, Zambarano, & Hurlbert, 1998), but the meaning and nature of ‘fore-play’ is rarely considered within research. Recent research has associated genital stimulation and oral sex with greater sexual satisfaction in reports of participants’ last sexual encounter (de Visser, Smith, Rissel, Richters, & Grulich, 2003; Herbenick, Reece, Schick, et al., 2010b). Judaism allows foreplay but as there is little research on what foreplay is, it remains uncertain whether not touching one’s spouse for two weeks before engaging in sexual relations impacts sexual satisfaction; women would be proceeding immediately from not touching to the prescribed sexual intimacy on the night of the Mikvah. Judaism holds, however, that the emotional relationship will enhance the sexual relationship and vice-versa. The following section explores this phenomenon by reviewing research on the relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction.

1.9 Moderators between Sexual and Marital Satisfaction

Many researchers have examined other variables that may impact sexual and marital satisfaction. The present research involves religious women, so the two variables I will review are women and religion. Several empirical studies have failed to establish that gender impacts sexual-marital satisfaction (e.g., Stanik & Bryant, 2012; Yucel & Koydemir, 2015), although other studies have found the association between sexual and marital satisfaction is stronger for women than men (Birnbaum, Reis, Mikulincer, Gillath, & Orpaz, 2006; Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Gadassi et al., 2016; Guo & Huang, 2005). Birnbaum et al. (2006) assert that women consider the sexual aspect in more emotional

and interpersonal terms, while men are more focused on fulfilling their sexual needs. This study, however, does not take account of individual differences. This study was conducted on university and community samples, so the generalizability of the findings is uncertain. To validate these findings, the study would need to be replicated on different groups such as married or distressed couples.

A review of sexuality and religion by Hernandez, Mahoney and Pargament (2014) observes that most religions tend to restrict sexual activity until marriage. While both Judaism and Christianity place importance on sexual relationship between married couples, for both reproductive and relationship purposes, premarital and extramarital sex is seen by both as sinful and is prohibited. These researchers accordingly concluded that one could expect a correlation between religiousness and conservative attitudes to sex. Davidson, Moore, and Ullstrup (2004) unsurprisingly found unmarried female college students with strong religious beliefs were less likely to have sexual relations than others. Among married individuals, a negative association was found between permissive attitudes to extramarital sex (DeMaris, 2009) and actually participating in extramarital sex (e.g., Burdette, Ellison, Hill, & Glenn, 2009). Conservative attitudes may shape the individual's understanding of sex and the value they place on it; a devout Christian, for example, might share St. Paul's stern, gloomy view that sex is a necessary evil, since 'it is better to marry than to burn' (1 Corinthians 7:8-10).

One study indicates that religiousness may moderate the link between sexual and relationship satisfaction. Hyun and Joseph (2010) study of marital and sexual satisfaction in Korean pastors and their spouses found no significant correlation between sexual and marital satisfaction. These findings contradicted those of Guo and Huang (2005) whose study of a sample of Asian couples found a positive correlation between sexual and marital satisfaction. Hyun and Joseph (2010) therefore hypothesized that the relationship between marital and sexual satisfaction is weaker the more religious one is. Drawing on these findings, Lazar (2017) studied the relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction among Jewish women living in Israel, and found, in confirmation of previous studies, a weaker association between sexual and marital satisfaction for religious than secular women. Lazar (2017) also found that the religious women in the study who had been married for a short period of time showed a weaker association between sexual and marital satisfaction than those who had been married longer. In contrast to this finding, the association of secular women did not change with marriage duration. However, this study was based on the assumption of a correlation between sexual and marital satisfaction. While the results are congruent with this assumption, they do not establish how sexual satisfaction influences marital satisfaction. In addition, this research was conducted only on women and although some research shows sexual marital satisfaction is similar in men and women, (Guo & Huang, 2005; Yeh et al., 2006), the influence of religion on marital and sexual satisfaction may be different for men. Like most studies of sexual satisfaction, this one is based on self-reports and therefore may be impacted by desirability effects.

1.10 Importance of emotional and sexual intimacy

Given orthodox Judaism's belief that family purity rules enhance both the emotional and sexual intimacy of a couple, this study will review the link between and importance of the two. Current literature shows a link between intimacy and relationship satisfaction: those who score highly on relationship satisfaction also report high feelings of intimacy (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Schaefer & Olson, 1981). Couples often seek therapy for lack of intimacy (Doss, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004; Geiss & O'Leary, 1981; Veroff, Kulka, & Douvan, 1981). Inability to express intimacy in a romantic relationship naturally augurs negative relationship outcomes.

Couple intimacy is often understood as a relationship process. Research on same-sex couples shows that communication is a crucial factor which can help or hinder intimacy within the romantic relationship. When partners feel comfortable discussing their vulnerabilities and mutually validate one another's feelings, they are more likely to feel intimate with one another (Laurenceau, Feldman Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Laurenceau, Feldman Barrett, & Rovine, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2008; Reis & Shaver, 1988). In particular, emotional aspects of intimacy (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Greeff & Malherbe, 2001) and sexual aspects of intimacy (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Guo & Huang, 2005; Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Litzinger & Gordon, 2005; Sprecher, 2002; Yeh, Lorenz, Wickrama, Conger, & Elder, 2006) are associated with a couple's relationship satisfaction.

As sexual and emotional intimacies are part of the same relationship, they are expected to be associated with one another. Empirical studies have also found a positive association between reports of sexual and emotional intimacy by both partners (Haning et al., 2007). Clinical observations have found that those who are sexually satisfied may not feel emotionally satisfied; similarly, emotionally satisfied partners may not feel sexually satisfied. Research has also found that men place a greater value on sexual and physical activity, while women attach greater value to emotional closeness, affection and love (Hook, Gerstein, Detterich, & Gridley, 2003; Ridley, 1993; Sprecher, 2002; Talmadge & Dabbs, 1990) showing that women and men have different experiences of intimacy. This however is a sweeping generalization; there are strong variations in culturally shaped expectations and attitudes.

Yoo et al (2014) found the positive association between a couple's relationship satisfaction and their communication may be created through indirect pathways. When people perceived their partner's communication to be positive, they were more likely to feel intimate in an emotional and sexual way. The increased intimacy would enhance their relationship satisfaction. Yoo et al (2014) also found that

when one of the couple felt emotionally close to their partner, their partner was more likely to feel satisfied with their relationship. Jewish law aligns with this aim to enhance both the physical and the emotional dimensions of the marital relationship. In order for orthodox Jewish couple to understand the laws and the rationale behind the physical separation, they are expected to take marriage classes separately, to help them appreciate the importance of these laws and how they can positively impact their marriage.

1.11 Influence of marital beliefs on marital relationship

Traditional Judaism sees marriage as a contractual bond in which men and women create a relationship in which G-d is directly involved. Though having children is not the sole purpose of marriage, a Jewish couple is expected to fulfill the commandment to have children (Genesis, 1:28). In this view, man and woman merge into one soul. In Judaism man is incomplete if he is not married (Babylonian Talmud, Yebomoth 62b). Orthodox Jewish women could thus be expected to have their own marital beliefs, based on Jewish law. Although the present research does not set out to explore marital satisfaction, its focus on purity laws must take account of the wider context of the marital relationship. I will therefore explore how beliefs about marriage can impact relationship satisfaction.

Recent findings suggest that the way one understands marriage, regardless of whether or not one is married, influences outcomes (Carroll et al. 2007; Masarik et al. 2012; Willoughby et al. 2013). Marital beliefs are related to specific outcomes in terms of sexual decision-making (Willoughby and Dworkin 2009; Willoughby and Carroll 2010), risk-taking (Carroll et al. 2007, 2009) and mental health (Carlson 2012). The relationship between general marriage beliefs and certain relational behaviours or outcomes is under-researched although there have been a few studies of this issue that I will note. Some studies have found that relational trajectories can be altered by marital intentions or expectations (Barr and Simons 2012). Carlson et al. (2004) found in a 1-year follow up that those who had a more positive outlook on marriage were less likely to break up, though it is not clear which is cause and which effect. Orthodox Jews believe family purity laws keep the marriage strong and long-lasting. Carlson et al. (2004) suggest that the very commitment to observance, rather than the observance itself, is the active factor in ensuring the durability of these marriages.

Effort is another factor in relational quality. Research has moved away from focusing on negative aspects of relational functioning, towards understanding the features of relationship well-being. A positive behaviour that has been studied involves the effort and energy put into the relationship. Relational effort is conceptualized as openness to changing behaviour to enhance the relationship. Wilson et al (2005) see this type of relational effort as crucial to a healthy relationship. Many studies

have linked relational effort, awareness and willingness to change one's behaviours, to increased relationship satisfaction (Braithwaite et al. 2011; Pepping and Halford 2012; Wilson et al. 2005), evidence that successful relationships need to be worked on.

Willoughby et al. (2015) found that cognitions and beliefs about marriage in general influence relationship processes. Those with stronger beliefs in the importance and permanence of marriage were associated with higher commitment to their partner, generating more relational effort and higher relationship satisfaction and stability. This may be a cyclical, rather than a causal process. Earlier studies show that marital beliefs are linked to decisions formed before marriage (Carroll et al. 2007; Willoughby and Dworkin 2009). These results support the marital paradigm theory (Willoughby et al. 2013) that views on marriage may impact the relational process and views about specific relationships. Willoughby et al. (2015) confirm the self-evident proposition that those who value marriage more highly also appear to be more committed to their partner. This commitment can lead to more effort and resources being put into the relationship, enhancing relational effort and belief that the relationship is stable and satisfying. This research therefore supports the orthodox Jewish view that preparing couples for marriage can positively impact their relationship and help them cope better with rules of family purity. It remains questionable, however, whether or how religion itself influences marital satisfaction. This topic is discussed below.

1.12 Predictors of marital satisfaction within a religious context

Over the last few decades, links between religion and positive marital outcome have been established (Brown, Orbuch, & Bauermeister, 2008; Call & Heaton, 1997; Fincham & Beach, 2010; Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2008; Schramm, Marshall, Harris, & Lee, 2012; Vaaler, Ellison, & Powers, 2009; Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2008). Although considerable research suggests that different aspects of religious involvement impact marriage, there has been less research into how this occurs (Day & Acock, 2013; Goodman, Dollahite, Marks, & Layton, 2013).

Many studies have investigated associations between religion and marital outcome (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Research has shown a large variety of measures of religiosity that predict positive marital outcomes. For example, churchgoing is associated with lower divorce rates and greater marital commitment (Brown et al., 2008; Call & Heaton, 1997; Mahoney et al., 2008; Vaaler et al., 2009; Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2008). Various measures of religiosity, such as participating in religious communities and personal spiritual growth are also associated with reported increased levels of marital satisfaction, commitment and lower divorce rates (Goddard, Marshall, Olson, & Dennis, 2012a; Mahoney, 2010; Olson, Goddard, & Marshall, 2013; Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008). Lower divorce rates however, do not necessarily imply marital

satisfaction; for example, the Roman Catholic religion forbids divorce, regardless of the misery of the couple, and other couples might fear social ostracism should they decide to divorce. Still others might stay together for the sake of their young children.

Much research has correlated positive marital outcomes with compatible religious views of the partners (Call & Heaton, 1997; Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Myers, 2006; Schramm et al., 2012). However, findings related to religious homogamy are inconsistent. Recent literature reviews suggest that religious homogamy may be becoming less relevant to couples in recent years as interfaith marriages are increasing (Fincham & Beach, 2010; Mahoney, 2010; Mahoney et al., 2008; Myers, 2006). Regardless of these inconsistencies, recent studies have found similarity of religious perspective to be a strong predictor of marital well-being (Goodman, Dollahite, & Marks, 2012; Goodman et al., 2013).

Much recent research focuses on the processes of religion that affect marital well-being. Olsen et al.'s (2016) regression study confirms that forms of religious observance are linked to marital well-being and that both religion and personal values are directly linked to marital satisfaction. Earlier findings are more diverse (Mahoney et al., 2008; Myers, 2006), but Olsen et al (2016) found a positive association between marital satisfaction and similarity of religious beliefs. This is because understanding and agreement on specific religious issues was a strong determinant of marital pleasure. Day and Acock (2013) found that forgiveness, commitment and sacrifice within a marriage formed an association between religion and marital wellbeing. This may be, but it is hardly reasonable to assume that only religious people are capable of these generous feelings; religiosity is not synonymous with unselfishness. So these findings tell us little. There is also evidence that serious commitment to the sanctity of marital vows and a focus on the couple, rather the individual, also predict marital commitment (Nelson, Kirk, Ane, & Serres, 2011). Again, this is hardly the prerogative of religious couples.

Goldman et al. (2012, 2013) explored how religion may impact commitment and coping within marriage. They found that marital commitment is connected to religious beliefs, including seeing the marriage as unique, believing that G-d is part of the marriage, faith and hope regarding the marriage, understanding the importance of forgiveness and believing the relationship is for the long term. Except for the belief that G-d is part of the marriage, however, none of these is an exclusively religious belief. It may be that spirituality, rather than religion, is the key factor in the strength of these relationships. Couples also said that their religious practices, such as their marriage ceremony, prayers and religious participation in their community, enhanced their commitment to their partners. Couples also particularly associated certain holy rituals, and sharing religious beliefs with their partner, with positive marital relations; they felt that these rituals helped them to cope better in

challenging situations. Both findings support the association between religious practice and positive marital functioning, though the findings make no attempt to establish causality; is marital harmony the effect of religious faith or is it simply contingent?

Another way religion may impact marital outcomes could be through personal or spiritual values. Research has shown a link between religion and personal values. Women who attend religious services regularly have a greater sense of belonging than those who don't (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996). Greenfield, Vaillant, and Marks (2009) found a link between participation in organized religion and feelings of sense of purpose; spirituality was linked to a spectrum of values including positive associations with others, personal growth, autonomy and self-acceptance.

Much literature now focuses on how personal values can predict marital outcomes. Evidence suggests marital wellbeing is influenced by shared religious values; numerous studies have linked similarity of religious attitudes to commitment, increased marital satisfaction and lower divorce rates (Brown et al., 2008; Call & Heaton, 1997; Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Mahoney, 2010; Mahoney et al., 2008; Myers, 2006; Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006; Schramm et al., 2012; Vaaler et al., 2009; Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2008). Gordon and Baucom (2009) found that those who reported spousal positivity also self-reported marital satisfaction. They also found that coping skills and optimism may be indirectly linked to marital satisfaction through positive associations. Luo et al. (2008) studied Chinese married couples and found that intrinsic personal values such as morality were related to personal satisfaction. However, American studies have produced more mixed results (Gaunt, 2006; Luo & Klohnen, 2005). The research is currently inconclusive; more work needs to be conducted into the association between values and marital outcomes, and the ways these are mediated by socio-cultural context.

It may therefore be useful for professionals working with married religious clients to explore what religion means to them and to ascertain their spiritual practices and personal values. Given the strong association between these variables and marital wellbeing, considering a client's faith and values within a clinical setting can help couples enhance their marriage and avoid negative outcomes.

1.13 Religious Approaches to menstruation

As the family purity laws are structured around a women's menstrual cycle, I felt it important to review religious approaches to menstruation and what they mean to those involved. Across different cultures, women throughout history have been paradoxically commended and demonized for their reproductive processes (Goldenberg and Roberts 2011). The term "mother" is venerated worldwide (Glick and Fiske 2001). A menstruating woman, however, is considered polluted, contaminated and dangerous (Buckley and Gottlieb, 1988). Judaism, Hinduism and Islam hold this belief, each

organizing rituals and prohibitions on menstruating women (Guterman et al. 2008). Such regulations are also found in some modern western cultures; studies in Great Britain, Mexico, Canada and the United States confirm the persistence of many myths and negative feelings regarding menstruation (e.g., Lawlor and Choi, 1998; Marván et al, 2006; Rempel and Baumgartner, 2003; Roberts et al, 2002). However, unlike most religions, modern western culture imposes few ‘menstrual rules’. Menstruating observant Jewish, Islamic and Hindu women are bound by tightly framed rules and regulations (Guterman et al. 2008). Religious menstrual practices that prohibit certain behaviours and encourage others promote deep attentiveness to one’s menstrual cycle. Such rituals can therefore reinforce negative attitudes to menstruation, but also, paradoxically, allow women to see menstruation as a natural and communal experience. Feminists argue that the view of menstruation as embarrassing and shameful (Erchull et al. 2002; Kissling, 1996) is common in modern cultures worldwide and discourages positive menstrual attitudes (Lee and Sasser-Coen 1996; Marván et al. 2006). Studies have shown that people edge away from a woman who makes it known she is menstruating, implying a belief that menstruation is contaminating or polluting (Roberts et al. 2002). Sexual objectification in some cultures appears to make women feel ashamed resulting in self exclusion, and hiding menstruation evidence in particularly from men (e.g., Johnston-Robledo, et al. 2007; Roberts, 2004).

Women’s attitudes to menstruation are mixed. Women who filled out Chrisler et al.’s (1994) “Menstrual Joy Questionnaire” (MJQ) reported higher positive feelings about their cycles than those who filled out the “Menstrual Distress Questionnaire” (Moos, 1986). A follow-up study removed the title MJQ, to remove the biased term ‘joy’, without any change to the results (Aubeeluck and Maguire 2004). Research therefore shows women’s views about menstruation are multifaceted. In Brooks-Gunn and Ruble’s (1980) Menstrual Attitude Questionnaire, Roberts’s (2004) Menstrual Self-Evaluation Scale, and Marván et al. (2006) Beliefs and Attitudes Toward Menstrual scale, women from different countries display a spectrum of attitudes and emotions towards their menstrual cycle. Some found it more shameful, embarrassing and bothersome than others.

Although modern Western culture is comparatively relaxed about women’s behaviour while menstruating (Hoskins, 2002), the world’s major religions concur that the menstruating period is unhygienic (Erchull et al. 2002; Roberts et al. 2002). Hinduism, Judaism and Islam all prohibit menstruating women from sexual activity. Jewish scripture decrees: “she shall be in her impurity for 7 days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening” (Leviticus 15:19). The Qur’an (2:222) states: “Say it is an illness, so let women alone at such times and go not into them till they are cleansed.” Islamic law specifies that it is not the woman herself that is impure but the blood alone (Maghen, 1999). A menstruating Muslim woman is prohibited from praying, visiting a mosque, fasting during Ramadan and touching the Qur’an (Guterman et al, 2008). According to traditional

Hinduism, it is the women herself who is polluted during menstruation. They are not allowed to work, brush their hair, bath, or touch water or fire (Guterman et al, 2008). To end their impurity, Hindu women must wash their hair on the fourth day and their bodies on the fifth (Leslie, 1991). Women have welcomed the isolation as a restful break from work and the monotony of life (Nagarajan, 2007). Dunnavant & Roberts (2013) looked at positive and negative experiences of menstruation in Orthodox Jewish, Muslim and Hindu women. They found women expressing ambiguous and paradoxical feelings of being simultaneously empowered and part of a community despite the oppressiveness of the rituals. The rituals are restricting yet renewing; women feel their bodies are polluted but also powerful, and although they feel isolated from men, they feel united within the community. This study did not investigate how actively participants engaged in the practices of their religion and is limited to women in the United States. A wider and more varied sample of participants could enhance our understanding of how religion impacts women's experience of menstruation.

1.14 The Orthodox Jewish view of menstruation

Like the above-mentioned religions, Judaism views menstrual blood as 'unclean' and 'impure', signaling the death of a potential life. The Torah states: "You shall not approach a woman in her time of unclean separation, to uncover her nakedness" (Leviticus 18:19). During menstruation various restrictions are placed upon a woman in order to prevent physical contact with her husband (Eider, 1999). Orthodox Jews believe husband and wife are not only forbidden physical contact, they are also required to sleep in separate beds and prohibited from passing objects between themselves; the object must be set down and picked up rather than passed directly from hand to hand. No difference is drawn between sexual and non-sexual contact. These rules are required to be kept for a minimum of five days of bleeding, followed by seven 'clean' days, during which no bleeding can be seen.

When the seven 'clean' days are over, the woman must immerse herself in the mikvah (ritual bath), which transforms her from an impure to a pure state. Anything that may separate the women from the water must be removed before immersion, such as unwanted bodily hair, untrimmed nails, nail varnish and makeup. Once the woman emerges, she is considered 'pure' and may resume contact with her husband. Orthodox Jewish identity is bound up in the observance of these laws (Donin, 1972; Wasserfall, 1992). Their importance continues through the cycle and Judaism therefore also has strong views on sexual relations.

Some studies have shown women view Mikvah as invasive; for others, it provides a space to be with one another and an opportunity to feel in control (Hartman and Marmon, 2004), though it is unclear what sort of control is involved in compulsory ritual immersion. Equally ambivalently, while menstruation can create what Marx called "false consciousness", whereby the woman internalizes

patriarchal norms of female pollution, it can also be liberating (Hartman and Marmon, 2004). Niddah can signal a period of freedom from unwanted sexual relations (Hartman and Marmon, 2004). If so, however, Niddah functions merely to soothe the symptoms of a deeper malaise instead of addressing its cause; women would be better served by support in their marital relationships than by occasional days off. Empowering women with the right to say ‘no’ might be better for their long-term psychological health than granting them what effectively amounts to a prisoner’s ‘time off for good behaviour’. In order to explore this deeper and understand one’s perspectives, I have looked at the modern feminist thought within this topic.

1.15 Modern Feminist Thought and Patriarchal Structures

Cultural critics concur that patriarchal cultures negatively define and objectify women’s bodies (Douglass, 1966). Patriarchal values categorize women’s bodies as opposite and inferior to those of men: “inherently different from men’s [bodies] in ways that made them both defective and dangerous” (Weitz, 1998, 3). In particular, menstruation has been interpreted as evidence of female impurity; this oppressive view, and the equally oppressive regulations surrounding menstruation, has been vigorously challenged by recent feminist theorists. Paula Hyman (1976, 110), for example, argues: “It is precisely in this area [of sexual regulation] that the second-class status of women within Judaism is highlighted.” Judith Plaskow (1990, 184-85) agrees: a review of Jewish religious sources on women makes it “difficult to conclude anything other than that women are a source of moral danger and an incitement to depravity and lust.” Jewish feminists argue that these religious laws heap oppression and humiliation on women and their bodies by inferring that they are a “potential source of pollution and disorder whose life and impact on men must be regulated” (Baum, Hyman and Michel, 1976; Biale, 1984; Priesand 1975; Swidler, 1976).

A law apparently designed to respect women yet which controls and governs the sexual relationship with a husband “is a fecund symbol for both condensing and expressing a complex set of notions about women, life, and the world” (Delaney, 1988, 76). It is therefore important to explore with women themselves how they experience these regulations and procedures and how this experience might define them. Foucault’s theory of discipline as the exercise of power (Foucault, 1979) offers a useful means of analysing practices such as these family purity laws in terms of the “micropractices” that replicate the larger-scale power structures of the modern state. In deference to family purity laws, observant women need to be fully cognisant of their bodily cycles, while simultaneously coping with daily activities such as dress code, sleeping arrangements with their spouse, and of course, physical contact with their husbands. Although in no way intended as punishment, these regulations therefore exercise the kind of restriction that substitutes for punishment in Foucault’s view of the hierarchical power structure of society. The Jewish laws are inscribed in the Old Testament (Torah), which

orthodox Jews accept as holy and immutable, a divine authority that makes it difficult for women to challenge them. Steinberg (1997) comments that women are obliged to observe family purity laws regardless of their personal views or understanding of them. Yanay and Rapoport (1997) add that while Jewish women have practised family purity laws for thousands of years, their attitudes to these laws have differed radically over both historical time and geographical areas.

In 1973, Rachel Adler, an Orthodox Jewish writer, wrote a defence of the family purity laws. Years later, Adler recanted, stating that she could no longer endorse this defence. Her initial article rejected the feminist proposition that family purity laws gave women ‘rights’, renewing the blissful honeymoon experience by reuniting husband and wife after a period of physical separation. In 1992 Adler claimed that she had tried to normalize menstruation and give it spiritual significance by interpreting it as a symbolic death and rebirth; the Jewish woman would experience a renewal of life after the Mikvah and menstruation was “an autumn within, the dying which makes room for new birth” (Adler, 1973). Adler had rejected the terminology of ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ or ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’, preferring the Hebrew originals, ‘tumah’ and ‘taharah’. Abstention from sex was a form of death, an awaiting of rebirth. In 1992, Adler’s view changed completely:

“What I had succeeded in creating was a theology for the despised, reminiscent of certain strains of early Christianity, where worldly power went unchecked, the slave remained a slave, the poor stayed poor, the woman subject to her husband, but the meaning of indignity was inverted and transfigured: humiliation was triumph, rejection was salvation, and death, eternal life. My theology upheld the rules and practices that sustained women’s impurity by holding out to the impure a never before experienced sense of purity”. (Adler, 1992, 162)

This view of the purity laws is very similar to the psychologically convincing argument of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in Part 3 of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), who claimed that Christian morality and the celebration of poverty and forgiveness, was simply proof of a neurotic slave mentality. Adler agrees that endorsing oppression testifies to the power of brainwashing.

So although Adler’s first article attempted to apply the purity rules to a modern context, she came to believe that her work was used by Rabbis to brainwash women into unwitting complicity in their own enslavement. Adler understood that designing new theories or interpretations for women didn’t necessarily change the meaning of their lived experiences. Theory and doctrine cannot change the reality of experience; only long-lasting intra-psychic development can alter both practice and social identity.

During the last thirty years or so, in the context of wider social libertarianism, religious feminists have started to challenge the norms and assumptions underpinning monotheistic religions. They question gender roles, values and social structures, and argue that women's religious needs and desires must be respected (Gross, 1996). Religious feminist women demand equal influence and leadership within their communities. The status of American Christian women has changed dramatically, with greater equality between men and women in all aspects of leadership.

This cultural shift is also true of the different branches of Judaism. The advocacy of Jewish women has brought about change (Fishman, 1993). Orthodoxy, although initially resistant to change, has taken small steps toward the enhancement of women's status; there are now more public roles for women (Horowitz, Beck and Kadushin, 1997). There is also greater interest in the history of women in traditional Judaism (Adler, 1998; Davidman, 1991; Greenberg, 1981; Hyman and Moore, 1997; Kaufman, 1991; Prell, 1999; Weissler, 1998). Nevertheless, Jewish studies have paid comparatively little attention to gender issues (Davidman and Tenenbaum, 1994). Very few have examined the different identities of Jewish men and women. Cohen (1988) identified gender-based differences in the education and identity of Jewish men and women. Sklare and Greenbaum (1967) and Goldstein and Goldstein (1996) found that Jewish women were more likely than men to belong to Jewish organizations and to volunteer for the community, perhaps reflecting cultural conditioning rather than biological differences.

Adler (1991) reflects the wider influence of secular feminism in arguing that it is not possible to entrench a feminist Judaism without changing attitudes towards sexuality, and that Judaism remains institutionally indifferent to women's experiences. Adler argues that research into the sexuality of both genders will confirm that female sexuality is part of accepted practice and thought in the context of the Torah, Israel and G-d.

Similarly, Tova Hartman Halbertal's *Appropriately Subversive* (2003) explores the experience of Catholic and orthodox Jewish mothers. Despite their unhappiness, these devout women choose to remain insiders. Hartman interviewed mothers of teenage daughters in religious communities: Catholics in the United States, Orthodox Jews in Israel. Her interviewees struggled to accommodate their personal experience of oppression and resentment to their equally pressing need to remain grounded in their religious faith and cultures. These interviewees were all teachers, mostly in religious community schools, and all were mothers of adolescent daughters. Their specific issue was whether to pass on to their daughters the values and traditions of a culture which they certainly prized, at the cost of imposing on their daughters the same subservience to patriarchal authority that they themselves resented. Hartman's controversial conclusion is that these women saw their well brought-up, obedient daughters as a form of insurance policy, allowing the mothers to simultaneously protect their daughters and guarantee the mothers' own conformity, while freeing them to take social risks or

express unorthodox views. Such women accept and value traditional religious practices but as educated women, trained to think independently, they are also able to confront the tension between commitment and resistance within a single identity in terms of the way they raise their daughters. However, Hartman fails to establish a direct causal connection for this plausible theory.

Despite the differences between Jewish and Catholic practices, Hartman found a strong similarity in the psychological and identity struggles of these women. Also surprising, given the social differences between America and Israel, both groups described similar struggles between conflicting loyalties, explaining how they attempted to reconcile these conflicts in order to offer their daughters the spiritual and social benefits of conformity without the downsides of oppression and resentment against the misogyny intrinsic to their religion. Yet they were also reluctant to share their experience of unhappiness and dissatisfaction with their daughters, preferring to protect them within the safety of a religious culture that offered women security at the expense of freedom and even happiness.

The obvious inference is that patriarchal authoritarian structures inhibit the free development of individual identity and relationships with daughters, even when women voluntarily accept the constraints of these systems. This tension seems in some ways similar to the ‘double-think’ demanded by totalitarian regimes, which require citizens to believe things that are self-evidently untrue. Hartman’s intelligent interviewees were poised uncertainly on the boundary between uncertainty and belief; in a fast-changing twenty-first century world, this tension between tradition and modernity is becoming increasingly strained.

Another influential feminist, Judith Plaskow, produced the first work of Jewish feminist theology, *Standing Again at Sinai*, in 1990. In this book, Plaskow argues that Jewish history, including the theological principles of the religion, have been mediated by a patriarchal culture responsible for the terms in which these ideas are presented and understood. This has led to the religiously authorized marginalization of women, an injustice that must be redressed in order to acknowledge the equality of women's experiences:

“We must render visible the presence, experience, and deeds of women erased in traditional sources. We must tell the stories of women's encounters with God and capture the texture of their religious experience. We must expand the notion of Torah to encompass . . . women's words, teachings, and actions hitherto unseen. . . . we must reconstruct Jewish history to include the history of women”

Plaskow argues persuasively that the male authors of the Talmud, the extension of Biblical law, employed a ‘Midrashic’ method privileging the male perspective on life at the expense of the female. Accordingly, Plaskow calls for a new, female-oriented perspective on Biblical history and law, and

for new interpretations of patriarchal tradition that reflect the needs and perspectives of the late twentieth century.

In a similar spirit, Tamar Ross presents, in *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Feminism and Orthodoxy* (2004), a theoretical explanation for the conflict between orthodoxy and feminism, together with a potential resolution of the conflict. Ross's starting point is the argument that feminism is an essentially secular, humanistic belief system whose central ideology is based on the equality of men and women, in the broadest sense of the term: an equality that encompasses civic, legal, social and religious dimensions, and much more. In this sense, feminism is a humanist belief system, rooted in the identity politics of the modern age, adapting in conformity to the values of each new generation. Contrastingly, religion deals in the transcendent and as such, does not evolve in line with the cultural changes produced by political or technological advances. But religion is mediated through human agency and is not subject to change under the pressures of historical or cultural influences. Ross resolves this conflict by explaining that the transcendent values of an unchangeable religion are in fact handed down to us through the medium of human communication, and that it is therefore acceptable for religious law to be re-interpreted in the modern age in a way that reflects contemporary understandings of its underlying principles. This argument, like Plaskow's, reflects the postmodern insistence that meaning is not absolute, but is created by the belief systems and context of each generation and society. It is therefore possible to reinterpret religious law for a modern age without sacrificing one's religious faith.

In order to continue exploring women's experiences and perspectives I have reviewed studies on family purity laws.

1.16 Family purity laws

Family purity laws are a centuries-old Jewish tradition. Views about the rationale and justification for these laws vary greatly (Yanay & Rapoport, 1997). Much research has been devoted to the laws themselves, but their impact on the marital relationship of observant couples, in terms of happiness, unhappiness or sexual satisfaction, is under-researched (Labinsky, Schmeidler, Yehuda, Friedman, & Rosenbaum, 2009).

Hartman and Marmon (2004) investigated the experience of thirty women living in Jerusalem, who observe family purity rules. The women were aged between 25 and 57 and they had been married for between four months and 35 years. The interviews focused mainly on Niddah, Mikvah, the impact of the rules on the women themselves, their husbands, the community, and their relationship with G-d. The data was analysed using grounded theory (Charmatz 1983, 1995) and voice-centred analysis

(Gilligan et al, 1998). The study found that the women struggled to grasp the relevance of the rules, which they found oppressive. Common experiences included finding the observance of Niddah difficult and inconvenient, while the compulsory cycles of physical unity followed by separation conflicted with their physical and emotional wellbeing. The women were also reluctant to consult their Rabbis about their purity, as it made them feel demoralized and powerless. Overall, these responses signified resentment of, and internal rebellion against the authority of these patriarchal laws. Conversely, the women spoke of the spiritual benefits of keeping the laws; despite finding the rules difficult, they said that their voluntary commitment gave them added self-esteem, empowerment and beauty. The women felt valued, respected and sexually empowered, and appreciated that observance of the purity laws was central to their religious life and identity. It did not apparently occur to them that this might signal effective self-objectification or that true female empowerment does not come from internalizing male values. Hartman and Marmon (2004) explore gendered processes, challenging the concept of ritual purity and offering a strongly feminist critique of the family purity rules, published, significantly, in the *Journal of Gender and Society*. The authors' approach the topic from a sociological rather than a psychological perspective and are not concerned with the impact of keeping the rules on marital satisfaction, nor with the clinical implications for counselling psychology.

Hartman and Marmon's study (2004) was conducted in Hebrew and English and subsequently translated into English. Barnes (1996) argues that when grounded theory is applied to specific cultures, it is crucial for the data analysis to be conducted in the same language in which the interviews were conducted. One of the aims of qualitative research is to fully understand the subjective meaning of phenomena in particular contexts, so interpreting translated data can easily result in misreading. Researchers may inadvertently skew meanings expressed by participants, as there are few guidelines on the translation of research interviews (Esposito, 2001). Unfortunately, Hartman and Marmon (2004) do not reference or explain their translation methods and how they translated or coped with cultural meanings not encompassed by the English language (Temple & Young, 2004). This could have impacted the validity of their translations, suggesting a need for research in this area to be conducted in participants' native language. Another limitation concerns Hartman and Marmon's (2004) sample; a sample size of 30 is large for qualitative research but their findings cannot be generalised to women outside Jerusalem. More research into this topic, conducted in the UK, would therefore be valuable; I believe there is a need for a deeper understanding of orthodox British Jewish women's experience of family purity laws. Such research could yield insights allowing the development of culturally sensitive, bespoke therapeutic treatments.

Marmon's (1999, 2008) research in this area remains unpublished. Her thesis (2008) used narrative analysis to interpret semi-structured interviews with 21 couples and 4 individuals. The data were

quantitatively analysed using a hermeneutic mode. The findings relate to how family purity laws are practised, looking into how participants/couples merge their practices and beliefs and how they incorporate adherence to these practices into their lives. Marmon (2008) also explores how these laws help to create an identity, leading to challenges and conflicts between religious requirements and a secular lifestyle. The sociological and anthropological perspectives of this research are important to counselling psychology as a counseling psychologist is interested in the social and cultural context in which clients' problems are experienced. The field of counselling psychology would benefit from a study exploring clients' experiences of these challenges.

Marmon (1999) interviewed Jewish women in Boston, Massachusetts, and found that they had mixed feelings towards the rules on menstruation, with experiences 'fluctuating' between good and bad, depending on their stages of life, marriage, and personal needs. Marmon (1999)'s sample encompassed all levels of religion from Modern Orthodoxy to Haredi and Hassidic. The diversity of her sample limits its value as a plethora of variables reduces the representativeness of these findings. A further problem with this study is that it is not easily accessible to the British counselling psychologist as it is buried in a publication, alongside hundreds of religious texts dealing with instructional, theological, and explanatory information of Jewish religious practices.

The 53 American participants in Guterman's (2006) study admitted to occasionally flouting some Niddah laws. In another study of 267 modern orthodox Jews, Guterman (2008) explored levels of observance of family purity laws, and found that more rules were disregarded in the second week of Niddah (when one is checking), than in the first week, when one is bleeding. The more lenient rules of Niddah were also more likely to be disregarded than the strict ones. There is no way, however, to be certain that participants are telling the truth, as admitting to breaking these laws could be embarrassing for them. Although a primary ethical consideration of all such research is participant anonymity, the strongly communitarian nature of orthodox Jewry may impact on participants' willingness to be open – the culturally constructed instinct that 'Big Brother is watching you' is not easily discarded. This raises a more important issue than the mere fact of observance or non-observance – the perception among participants that they were doing wrong. This is very different from admitting to breaking rules they found irrelevant, damaging or foolish. Guterman (2006) also found that older women admitted to transgressing more laws than younger people, possibly because they feel less guilty about telling the truth, or perhaps because they have come to feel that the rules are pointless, so feel no compunction about admitting to breaking them. Further comparative studies are required to determine which of these explanations is the more likely.

In order to explain his findings on failures in observance, Guterman refers to Schachter's (2002) study of 30 young modern orthodox Israeli adults, which uses a narrative approach to explore their identity

development. Schachter (2002) suggests identity conflict may arise for those attempting to adhere to Jewish religious law within a western environment. When Jewish rules and sexuality are discussed, participants express a sense of conflict between their communitarian Jewish religious adherence and their personal modern identity. Guterman (2006) used Schachter's findings to suggest that non-adherence might result from this inner conflict between traditional religion and western modernity. As a result of this conflict, Guterman suggests, some will decide which rules to keep and which not to keep.

Guterman's (2008) recruitment and research methods - through the internet - raise questions about the validity of his findings. It is possible to question the honesty of participants' online questionnaire responses on transgressions and the accuracy of their representation of modern orthodoxy. Further research into the attitudes of different communities of Orthodox Jews to the laws on purity is therefore necessary. That said, Guterman's (2006, 2008) research usefully confirms that people do transgress Jewish family purity laws, and when they are more likely to transgress. Unfortunately, he offers no independent theory why transgressions are committed, contenting himself with Schachter's explanation. Further qualitative research could therefore throw light on issues such as the reasons for non-observance of religious law on purity and the quality of adherents' experience of observing these laws.

Labinsky et al.'s (2009) quantitative study of American orthodox Jewish women and their sexual relationships is based on Laumann, et al. (1999), who investigated sexual dysfunction in men and women. Labinsky et al. (2009) found that women who had a more positive view of Niddah and Mikvah had greater physical satisfaction than those with negative views. This could suggest that Niddah enhances the sexual relationships of some women, but it is equally likely that sexual satisfaction enhances women's positive experience of Niddah; it is unclear which is cause and which effect, or whether Niddah is simply contingent on these women's sexual satisfaction. The study also found that those who kept Niddah had higher emotional satisfaction than those who didn't but again, the causal relationship is unexplained. Labinsky's study was motivated by the aim of counselling groups of orthodox Jews and understanding problems in their sexual relationships rather than promoting Jewish law. Labinsky argues that those who have questions about serious sexual matters should seek professional help, rather than turning to Rabbis or religious teachers for advice. It would be necessary for counseling psychologists working with these clients to have a thorough understanding of family purity laws and the literature thereon.

Labinsky et al (2009) also found that women who had little trouble with accepting and observing family purity rules such as attending the Mikvah were less troubled than those whose feelings about the laws were conflicted. These laws clearly impact directly on family life and relationship

satisfaction. They also found that merely keeping the rules resulted in better emotional satisfaction but not sexual satisfaction. Women also reported sexual and emotional difficulties, with half having had psychotherapy to deal with marital or mental health problems. No causal mechanism to explain these varied findings has yet been proposed and it may be that there are too many variables to permit the formulation of any overarching explanation. This would explain why the findings of different studies vary so markedly.

Labinsky et al.'s study is published on a website rather than in a scholarly journal and may therefore lack credibility in comparison to other studies. However, the study was conducted at Manhattan's highly reputed Mount Sinai Hospital, and given the dearth of other literature, remains a valuable source of research into the sexual lives of Jews. This survey took place in the US and a similar study needs to be conducted in the UK to investigate how keeping Niddah impacts marital satisfaction; the American context of the study limits its relevance for UK psychological research. They is no reference to their methodology other than it being similar to that of Laumann et al. (1999), making it hard for the reader to assess the findings in the context of wider literature.

Turgel (2012) examined how women experience adherence to family purity laws and its potential impact on their marital relationships. In contrast to the above-mentioned research, this was an IPA study conducted in the UK; however, it remains unpublished, and therefore difficult for counselling psychologists to access. Turgel's (2012) participants reported distance in their marital relationships as their needs for intimacy and comfort were not met within the periods of separation from their husbands. However, Turgel (2012) postulates that these feelings of rejection might have been self-inflicted, the result of distancing behaviours by the wives during the periods of separation. If so, this would suggest that such responses are typical of attachment-avoidant personality types. This would comply with Marmon's (1999) finding of tension between couples during separation time, which could arise from emotional distancing. Turgel (2012) suggests women may engage in distancing behaviours in order to protect themselves from feeling even more rejected or hurt. This, however, is speculation and further research into the influence of attachment styles would be beneficial.

Revealingly, Turgel (2012) encountered considerable ambivalence in the interviewees. Women expressed negative feelings associated with separation but felt extremely positive when touching their husbands after periods of separation. Another strong contrast of feelings emerged when women spoke of finding separation both peaceful and challenging, and the mikvah personally fulfilling in some ways but shameful in others. Women found it personal as it was an experience undertaken on their own but they also experienced shame and exposure relating to being supervised while they dipped. Women appreciated the importance of the protective space afforded them in times of separation. They also reported the Mikvah experience as positively purifying, claiming that it felt like a rebirth. Turgel

(2012) suggests these conflicting and ambivalent feelings may result from unconscious identity conflicts as none of the women talk about their confusion or opposite feelings except in the privacy of the research setting. This could be supported by Gutterman's (2006, 2008) above-mentioned finding that religious Jews experience identity conflicts which result in transgression of certain laws. Women reported further conflict from the tension between keeping the rules due to fear and guilt while reporting at the same time that the rules gave them strict boundaries that made them feel safe and contained. The women were found to manifest cognitive dissonance and sought a change of attitude or beliefs to reduce the ensuing discomfort and strain (Festinger, 1957).

Although Turgel (2012) apparently gained deep understanding of her participants' experiences, the accounts she presents may not be entirely reliable as many of the women were drawing on memories of feelings going back as far as 15 years. Memory is not a stable entity but a process of evolving, transformative narrative construction, so these findings may have limited value. There is therefore a need for further research to separately interview women at the same stage of their marriage cycle e.g. newlyweds, after five years or after fifteen years. Future comparative studies might then also take account of changes in attitude over time to keeping family purity laws.

Having reviewed the above findings, I believe I have identified a significant gap in the multicultural counselling psychology literature on orthodox women's experience of family purity laws within the first five years of their marriage. Accordingly, I decided to conduct an in-depth study in order to capture a qualitative impression of such women's perspectives of experiencing family purity laws, and to contribute to the resources of multicultural literature for counselling psychologists. This study aims to contribute to psychologists' understanding of what women experience by keeping these laws, and hopefully be of value not only to counselling psychologists, but also to psychotherapists, researchers and anyone else working with those who observe such rules, thereby promoting the development of culturally sensitive treatment interventions and maximizing our potential to offer these women encouragement and support.

1.17 Research Question

An exploration of women's experiences adhering to family purity laws within the first five years of marriage.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

2.1 Overview

The following research paper seeks to explore and explain the experiences of women's relationship to purity laws during the first five years of marriage. I will explain the research aims, outline the research question and consider the rationale of the research. I will then explain the research design, and the rationale for the chosen paradigm - Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Epistemological considerations will then be reviewed, followed by personal and epistemological reflexivity. The chapter will conclude with an outline of the procedures undertaken to complete the research, which will include sampling conditions, participants, interview schedule, recordings and transcriptions, analytic strategy and ethical considerations.

2.2 Research Aims

This research paper aims to explore the lived experience of female adherents of Jewish family purity laws within the first five years of marriage. In particular, the study aims to gain a deep understanding of the experience of such women, and of how adherence to these laws impacts them both personally and within their marriage. The core aim is to capture the women's experience of observing these laws within an intimate relationship and the potential implications of observance, emotionally, psychologically and within their marital relationship.

2.3 Research Question

An exploration of women's experiences adhering to family purity laws within the first five years of marriage.

2.4 Research Design

In order to explore the research question, this study uses a qualitative research design paradigm. The data was collected via semi-structured interviews with a sample of eight Orthodox Jewish women, all living in London. The data gathered was analysed using IPA as this method of analysis seeks to understand the subjective experience of an individual in relation to their life, and how they are able to make sense of their experiences by describing phenomena.

2.5 Rationale for the chosen paradigm

A qualitative methodology was chosen as this approach meets the key aim of the research - to understand individual experience in depth. I chose this methodology as my study aims to explore and understand the texture and quality of individuals' experience of observing family purity laws. My aim was to explore participants' experiences within a specific context and understand how they make sense of their world. This research is concerned with subjective experience and meaning-making, for which qualitative methods are best suited (Willig, 2013). These methods enhance understanding of participants' experiences and their responses to these experiences. They offer insight into the ways individuals construct their world through rigorous and careful exploration of their social world (McLeod, 2001). The essence of qualitative research is the recognition of the difference between objective, external reality and subjective experience – cognitive and affective – of that reality. McLeod (2005) argues that our personal and social worlds are highly complex and can be viewed from different perspectives. Finlay and Ballinger (2006) propose that qualitative research is similar to a 'quest', offering researchers the feeling that an 'adventure' lies ahead (Willig, 2001).

Quantitative research would not have suited this research study, which did not seek the type of cause-effect relationship for which quantitative research is best suited. My research did not work with predefined variables, nor did it warrant statistical analysis as it is not empirical. A quantitative methodology would be unable to probe or explain the experiences, thoughts, feelings and emotions with which this research is concerned. Qualitative research, by contrast, is undertaken in the belief that knowledge is socially constructed and intersubjective (Langdridge, 2007). It can also be used to study and gain different understandings in contentious or controversial areas (Stern, 1980). Although psychology is still dominated by the positivist view that knowledge and social facts can be uncovered (Langdridge, 2007), there is no consensus on the benefits of using one methodology rather than another. However, qualitative methods are becoming more popular, and the number of qualitative psychologists on the editorial board of the *British Journal of Social Psychology* and *Journal of Health Psychology* is rising (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008).

This research question was therefore better suited to qualitative methods of analysis over positive epistemologies that deal in the empirical analysis of concrete relationships within an external social world. Positivism seeks "Objective" knowledge of laws, regularities, and relationships that can be measured in terms of social "facts" (Pugh & Hickson, 1976a, 1976b; Skinner, 1953, 1957). Conversely, qualitative methodologies concentrate on the significance of understanding the processes by which people concretize their relationships to their world. Although quantitative research interests me and can yield illuminating results, it did not suit this particular research topic as there are no variables to measure, no hypothesis and no theory to prove or disprove (Willig, 2001).

The pluralistic framework recognises that there is no single way to study a hugely diverse world (Kasket & Rodriguez, 2011). This framework is a common standard, not only for qualitative research but also in counselling psychology. Cooper (2007) states that the core principle of a pluralistic framework is that psychological problems may have multiple causes and that it is therefore unlikely that a single therapeutic model is appropriate for every situation or case. In line with the pluralistic framework and methodological model, it is proposed that different methods will produce different findings (Willig, 2001). Qualitative research can therefore result in a rich diversity of findings and a positive bi-product. Phenomena and experiences are observable in many forms as the researcher moves beyond rigid positivism to recognize and accept that all 'knowledge' is changeable (Langdridge, 2007).

McLeod (2003) states that one aim of qualitative research is to clarify the meaning of social actions and situations in order to increase understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Willig (2011) notes that qualitative research explains, but does not predict, specific experiences. Qualitative research methods can therefore facilitate in-depth understanding of a topic, and add value and information to the field of counselling psychology by informing therapeutic practice. Qualitative research has accordingly proven to be an increasingly popular method of research for human-based psychological research (Kasket & Rodriguez, 2011).

2.6 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis and its foundations

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is "a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences" (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2010). IPA acknowledges the impossibility of complete access into one's personal world (Willig, 2011), but seeks instead an in-depth understanding of how one experiences their personal world. IPA is the preferred method for many counselling and clinical psychologists, and has become increasingly favoured, not only in psychological research, but also within the human, social and health sciences (Smith et al., 2009). The theoretical structure of IPA is built on phenomenology (Moran, 2000), hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969) and ideography (Smith, Harré & Van Langenhove, 1995), the three main dimensions of IPA that allow us to elicit as much meaning as possible. In the following section I will explore the role of phenomenology, hermeneutics and the influence of ideography.

Phenomenology

The essence of phenomenology is that it seeks to understand the connection between objective reality and subjective experience of that reality. It "attempts to describe in detail the content and structure of the subjects' perspectives of their world [and] consciousness, to grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences and to explicate their essential meanings." (Kvale, 1996, p. 53).

The aim of phenomenology is thus to explore subjective individual experience from the perspective of the individual, uninflected by the researcher's own presuppositions about the nature of the experience. It assumes that it is impossible to think about the world except from the subjective viewpoint of individual perception. In this sense, phenomenology is a post-modern ideology whose origins lie in the perspectival theory of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche:

“There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowing”; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity” be.” (Nietzsche, 1887/1989, p.119)

A disciple of Nietzsche, Husserl (1970, 1982) developed a theory of transcendental phenomenology that attempted to explain how we experience and understand the world (Spinelli, 2005, p. 6). Husserl's phenomenology is based on a rejection of the naturalist assumption that there is an independent, discoverable, external reality. According to Husserl, ‘reality’ is a construction, created by our conscious selves. The only thing we can be sure of is our own experience of phenomena, which we reduce to their eidetic essences, those mental images that remain visible to our perception. Although this may seem abstract, it is in fact the reverse; it represents a return to the concrete, the solid base of lived experience, as the slogan of phenomenology – “Back to the things themselves!” – suggests. And by concentrating solely on phenomena, says Husserl, we attain the only means by which knowledge can be determined. This makes it clear that phenomenology is a mode of methodological idealism, which seeks to explore an abstract phenomenon that we call ‘human consciousness and a realm of ‘pure possibilities’. Phenomenology therefore rejects the positivist assumption that truth is ascertainable by empirical, experimental methods, insisting instead that ‘meaning’ resides in the subject who perceives phenomena, rather than in the phenomena themselves. Taken to its extreme, this means that ‘the world’ is not an objective reality, but what in German is called ‘Lebenswelt’, the lived world, or the world as it is experienced by the individual. Thus the phenomenological researcher will typically focus on the way an individual experiences events – the relationship between the self and others, or the perception of material events and objects.

It follows that the aim of phenomenology is similar to that of the scientist – to discover what things are like, rather than to impose value judgements on them. The ultimate aim is not to evaluate or interpret experience but to display the individual's ‘Lebenswelt’. The phenomenological researcher believes it is impossible to think of the world in terms of externalized subjects and objects; we know these things only through the ways we experience them (Willig, 2011). The researcher is less

interested in external reality than in the interpretation of that reality by the individual within the context of a particular place, time or culture (Finlay, 2009; Langdridge, 2007).

This raises a problem with phenomenology that has frequently been cited by critics such as Terry Eagleton (2004): experience pre-dates language, since language is a social construct – but meaning cannot be constructed or replicated with language, since this is our only means of communication. Does this mean that the enterprise of phenomenology is doomed to failure? According to the philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure, meaning is not expressed by language but is actually produced by language. Meaning is, after all, in a deep sense historical – it is not so much a question of intuiting the reality of the experience of observing laws of purity but a question of practical transactions between individuals in a historically and socially specific context. The practitioner of the phenomenological methodology must therefore be aware that in spite of its focus on experience as the only ‘reality’, on that ‘reality’ rather than on meaningless ‘fact’, it is damagingly unhistorical. As Eagleton summarizes:

“Phenomenology sought to resolve the nightmare of modern history by withdrawing into a speculative sphere where eternal certainty lay in wait; as such, it became a symptom, in its solitary, alienated brooding, of the very crisis it offered to overcome.” (Eagleton, 2004, p. 53)

The goal of phenomenology is to understand the lived experience of an individual and how they experience what Martin Heidegger called ‘Dasein’, or ‘being in the world’. Bearing in mind the dangers signalled by Eagleton, it also tries not to ignore the view of the researcher as this is central to the interaction between participant and researcher. The phenomenological term “intersubjectivity” refers to the idea that “experience and knowledge are always intersubjective and temporal” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 16).

The phenomenological aspect of IPA therefore explores participants’ conscious awareness of their experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) in order to enable the researcher to empathise with and accept, rather than to analyse it. Husserl (1970, 1982) emphasises the significance of accepting participants’ experiences and how understanding of these experiences “present themselves to us in our consciousness” (Spinelli, 2005, p. 6).

Phenomenology, as noted above, is based on a belief, that we define ourselves in conscious relationship to our world, which underlines the descriptive transcendental method. Although it claims to ignore the prejudices of the researcher, as noted above, phenomenological researchers in psychology admit that, as Eagleton asserts, suspension of personal bias is in practice impossible. Husserl’s term ‘intentionality’ explains the relationship between conscious processing and its object

(Smith, 2008). As Nietzsche observed, it is not in practice possible to observe any phenomenon from no perspective at all; his famous analogy of the impossibility of an eye looking in no direction sums up the problem – detachment, however well meant, is in practice impossible since the very contemplation of an object stimulates some kind of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). The problems of detachment draw psychology into the realm of philosophical inquiry into the possibility of objectivity.

However, phenomenological method differs from the philosophy of transcendental phenomenology. Phenomenological psychology is more concerned with the uniqueness of human experience than with Husserl's concern with 'quidditas' or 'what-ness' (Spinelli, 1989). IPA research is indebted to Husserl rather for his discursive method (Willig, 2011). My research therefore employs a phenomenological methodology in order to recreate the experience of women who voluntarily accept the strict laws of Jewish religious purity, rather than to replicate the material conditions of observance. IPA considers not only how participants make sense of their world and how they create meaning out of their own life and experiences (Smith, 1996), but also other social and economic factors of participants' lives that can shape their experience (Lyons & Coyle, 2007). It can capture both particular individual experiences and how they relate to a certain socio-economic or cultural context (Smith, 2009). This is what I have attempted to do in my own research.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics differs from phenomenology in that it concedes the impossibility of non-perspectival understanding; the researcher's language and culture inevitably frame their own world-view and 'prejudices' (McLeod, 2001). Hermeneutics is thus a theory of interpretation. The recognition that meaning is historically conditioned led Husserl's most celebrated pupil, Martin Heidegger, to reject the 'transcendental subject' and begin instead from the perspective of the essential 'given-ness', or 'Dasein' of a subject. This is why Heidegger's work is often characterised as 'existentialist. Heidegger's central thesis is that being is only ever 'being-in-the-world' and understanding does not mean a state of static 'knowing' but consists of the dynamic of being itself. Put simply, 'Human existence is a dialogue with the world (Eagleton, 2004, p. 54). This means that even before we reach the stage of conscious, systematic thought, we have already acquired a repertoire of assumptions, drawn from our practical interaction with the world around us. This means that all understanding is historical, generated by the immediate situation in the here-and-now, bounded by time, and constituted by language. Hermeneutics, as understood by Heidegger, asserts that we do not use language to express meaning or describe experience; we use language to create meaning and to bring the world into being. We exist because we engage in language use: 'Only where there is language is there 'world' in the distinctively human sense.' (Eagleton, 2004, p. 55) Hence for Heidegger,

language is the place where reality manifests itself. This means that 'being' replaces 'I' as the centre of existence, and we accordingly privilege instinct and sensation over cognition and abstract thought. Heidegger's philosophy is frequently described as 'hermeneutical phenomenology' in order to distinguish it from Husserl's 'transcendental phenomenology'. In essence, it is the theory of interpretation. Hermeneutic interpretation, the theoretical foundation of IPA, therefore goes further than recording data, and attempts, while accepting that experience is inaccessible to the researcher, to capture its non-verbalized essence. Instead, it highlights the researcher's role in interpreting the participant's attempt to make sense of their experience (Smith & Osborn, 2008), in a 'double hermeneutic' or two-stage interpretation process; the researcher tries to interpret the participant's interpretation of the original experience (Langdrige, 2007, p. 68), while acknowledging that such interpretation can never be synonymous with the participant's experience or even the participant's interpretation of that experience (Willig, 2013). This requires the researcher to have an understanding of their own beliefs, expectations and experiences (Smith et al., 1999). The present study engages in this type of double hermeneutic interpretation, which acknowledges that the researcher's perspectives are the only medium through which participants' experience can be processed, but acknowledging that this can never permit more than a shadowy glimpse into the participants' worlds.

Phenomenology and hermeneutics constitute the theoretical foundations of IPA. As such, they are the foundational principles of all qualitative methodologies (McLeod, 2002, p. 56). The present study invokes both empathic hermeneutics, allowing the researcher to understand the individual's experience (Conrad, 1987, in Smith & Eutough, 2007, p. 36) and critical hermeneutics, whereby these experiences are critically evaluated (Ricoeur, 1970). The communication between researcher and participant allows a multi-dimensional interpretation and analysis of participants' experience, enabling the researcher to understand how participants understand their world (Smith, 2007).

Idiography

Idiography, the third key feature of IPA, concentrates on the particular, namely, single-person case studies (Smith, 1991; Weille, 2002). This approach, pioneered by Gordon Allport (1962), holds that the universal is best identified by studying the particular (Smith, 2008). This focus on the individual is the key difference between idiography and other methodologies, which rely on generalizability from numbers to validate their claims. The ideographic emphasis of IPA allows for a more detailed analysis of participants, as it concentrates on specific details, which are held to be representative.

Most methodological approaches follow the scientific consensus that a statistically relevant number of cases must be identified in order to generate valid inferences. This approach is justified in certain

cases, such as the testing of the safety and value of therapeutic drugs. By contrast, IPA's idiographic approach privileges the individual experience as valid in itself (Smith, 2008). Taking the individual experience as its starting point, idiography proposes, in the words of the poet William Blake, "To see a world in a grain of sand" (1789). Hence, IPA studies use small sample sizes to explore the experience of a particular group of people, in this case, Orthodox Jewish women attempting to make sense of a particular phenomenon (observing family purity laws) within a particular context (their marriage).

Symbolic interactionism is also a crucial part of the theoretical underpinnings of IPA (Smith, 1996). The way individuals provide meaning to their life experiences occur during and a result of their social interaction. IPA approves the problems of symbolic interactionism and how an individual's own meaning is a result of the construction of their own self-reflection (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

Overall, IPA gives the resources for the researcher to study and try to understand different meanings behind a person's relayed experiences and put the meaning of the experiences "within their personal, social, and cultural context" (Dean, Smith, Payne & Weinman, 2005, p.626). A personal detailed rationale for choosing IPA will follow.

2.7 Key features of IPA Methodology

IPA's focus on the detailed analysis of individual participant accounts means that sample studies tend to be small (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), though no fixed number is considered ideal; the researcher's aims and scope will dictate the choice of sample size in each case. Smith et al. (2009) recommend between 4 and 10 interviews for the purposes of doctoral research. Given that IPA explores the experience of individuals from a precisely defined socio-cultural or socio-economic setting, random sampling is deemed inappropriate and data collection is based on purposive sampling (Willig, 2013), whereby potential participants are identified and invited to participate by the researcher (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews are the preferred means of data collection. They enable the researcher to glean valuable in-depth information, in the form of recollections, thoughts and feelings, while allowing participants the opportunity to raise and pursue topics that are important to them, but of which the researcher might be unaware (Smith et al., 2009). Similarly, the researcher can adapt the interview structure and questions to match the participant's particular interests and concerns (Smith, 2008). Semi-structured interviews allow participants to speak at length about their experience, and have the virtue of flexibility which is so important to the idiographic principle of the value of the individual experience. At the same time, IPA interviews avoid 'leading questions', and aim to prompt

responses and reflections, rather than imply that a particular response is expected. This is especially important when the topic under discussion is of a sensitive nature.

2.8 Rationale for using IPA

IPA is compatible with the philosophy of counselling psychology, which seeks ‘to know empathically and to respect first-person accounts as valid in their own terms; to elucidate, interpret and negotiate between perceptions and world views but not to assume the automatic superiority of any one way of experiencing, feeling, valuing and knowing’ (British Psychological Society, 2005, pp. 1-2). This complies with the principle that IPA is non-judgmental, seeking rather to create an inter-subjective space between researcher and participant. In order to increase the validity of participants’ experience and respect the inter-subjectivity of the encounter elements, reflexivity is very important (Finlay, 2002), as discussed below.

IPA was selected for this study as the best tool for exploring and evaluating participants’ subjective experiences of the phenomenon under investigation (Smith, Flowers & Larking, 2009). The focus of the study is to ascertain how Jewish women experience observance of family purity laws and the impact this might have on them and their marital relationships. IPA is ideal for this purpose (Smith et al., 2009). Participants’ accounts of their experience, thoughts and feelings provide the researcher with a deep source of rich data. The theoretical origin of IPA is phenomenology, a philosophical approach used for research in the social sciences and psychology. Phenomenology focuses on the individual’s conscious experiences (Willig, 2001), which form the core of the self. As noted above, this study does not seek to determine the objective nature of experience but participants’ perception of their experience. The qualitative researcher’s focus is therefore on participants’ processing and understanding of their experience. This can pose difficulties for the researcher, who is attempting to understand an individual experience from an outside perspective. The researcher must therefore create their own interpretations, using interpretative activity to understand and evaluate participants’ lived experience (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA particularly aligns with my research question because it studies the lived experience of individuals as seen and processed by the individuals themselves (Smith, 2004). Although the aim is to look at the participant’s world, IPA necessarily involves the researcher’s own formations as the researcher aims to make sense of the participant’s world through interpretation and analysis. Hence there are two types of interpretation: first, the participant tries to present and interpret their experience; second, the researcher studies the participant’s attempt to make sense of their lived experiences (Smith & Osbourn, 2008).

IPA takes into consideration that we each inhabit a different world, independent of our own experience, and that information is therefore not objective (Lyons & Coyle, 2007). This leads researchers to adopt a social constructivist position, in which the researcher's analysis is partially the product of the researcher-participant relationship. The problem is that both our perception and understanding of phenomena are subjective, and since this knowledge is subjective, it follows that there can be no single, 'correct' interpretation. Even the language we use to describe our perceptions and interpretations is subjective, since language does not map what is 'out there' but constitutes our attempt to define it; it is a truism that one man's 'terrorist' is another man's 'freedom fighter'. The words themselves, as Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) explained, are meaningless 'signifiers', whose meaning derives from the value attributed to them by the speaker or writer. Bearing this in mind, by following the steps of IPA, I have attempted to decode what underlies the data to find the essence of my participants' experience, using the hermeneutic method. It is important, however, to be aware that reality and discourse has a circular connection. Discourse impacts on reality and on people. Some of my interpretations may therefore emerge as a result of my relationship with the participant. In order to account for this subjectivity, I have paid particular, detailed attention to the reflexivity part of this project.

Although IPA was, for the reasons cited above, my chosen approach, I also considered many others. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was one possibility, as I wanted my participants to express their understandings of their culture in relation to the world through symbolic meanings that could be discovered through their words and interactions. However, although grounded theory would allow theories to be generated, it would not explore participants' experience. I did indeed want to construct a theory, but it was more important for me to study participants' experience as IPA would enable me to do, while grounded theory would not. My aim was to explore what it means for a person to be in their own world, so that I might understand their experience as a whole. IPA allows exploration of "What it is like to experience specific conditions", centring on "the quality and texture of experience" (Willig, 2001, p. 9), and permit me to understand, explore and interpret the experience of others (Lyons & Coyle, 2007).

Discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), another option that I considered, explores how people understand their world through the language they use (Shotter, 1993). As this model concentrates on language (Burr, 1995) rather than in-depth experience, it did not suit the aims of my research questions, and further, my understanding of Saussurian semiotics made me suspect that this would be an unlikely means of eliciting truths about lived experience. IPA does recognize that language is an important part of the data, however, unlike discourse analysis, it does accept that this is the only way to look at reality (Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-Schaw & Smith, 2006). Unlike discourse analysis, IPA will allow me to look at participants' thoughts and perceptions.

Narrative analysis (Gee, 1991; Kirkman, 1997; Riessman, 1993) explores how people view their personal identity through self-constructed narratives (Linde, 1993). Instead of this, IPA allows participants to express their perhaps amorphous or disconnected experiences of their own world (Smith, 1995), and therefore privileges the protagonist rather than the event.

IPA best suited my research question, whose main aim was to value the individual by looking at their own experience within their world. This can be achieved by looking at their thoughts and perceptions of their own lived experiences. The open-ended, semi-structured interview technique associated with IPA was best fitted to achieve this aim as I was not testing a hypothesis, but trying to explore a particular phenomenon.

Structuring the question was a challenge. It was important to incorporate the term “how”, as a good research question should be process-orientated, looking at “how something happens” not at “what happens” (Willig 2001). I kept this in mind throughout my research as a constant reminder of how to explore the data.

2.9 Epistemological Viewpoint and Reflexivity

Epistemological Stance

IPA is different from other research methods as it has an epistemological openness which allows the researcher to create careful interpretations of the experiences, emotions and cognitions that are presented within the framework of a participants’ own explanation of these experiences (Smith, 1996). Although IPA focuses on trying to reach a deep understanding of participants’ lived experiences, it is aware that in practice, context and language are impediments to a full understanding of the reality of the participant.

Overcoming these barriers as far as possible requires me to think about my own position. This in turn means looking at what I know (epistemology), as well as my own assumptions (ontology) and how all this can impact my conduct and findings throughout the whole research process. Although no one particular epistemological stance is connected to IPA, after studying the stances in detail, I was not entirely clear which approach I should take for this study. According to Smith (2004), “IPA is part of a stable of closely connected approaches which share a commitment to the exploration of personal lived experience” (p. 41); this meant that several stances were open to me.

King and Horrocks (2010) give a clear description of three different epistemological stances that could be used in IPA, as they include both realist and relativist thinking. Although these positions

have some differences, they also share a lot of similarities. King and Horrocks (2010) were influenced by Willig (2001) to scrutinise these different but similar epistemological positions, taking into account what they assume about the world, the knowledge that is created, and the impact of the researcher.

The realist position (King and Horrocks, 2010) assumes that it is possible to gain direct understanding and access to the “real” world of the participant. This position, if correct, would mean that experiences and relationships can be understood and analysed directly and easily, and an empirical ‘truth’ ascertained. This at first excited me as it promises objective data that represent the wider community from which participants are drawn. The researcher, however, would need to remain objective and detached in order to avoid bias. A realist position would also only use language as a tool for investigating empirical experience and this study sought to uncover information about people’s thoughts about a particular phenomenon. As a recently married woman, I would find it difficult or even impossible to avoid personal bias; I would therefore be unable to separate myself from my own experience of the data while simultaneously accurately reflecting my participants’ experiences. Having a similar background to my participants created an additional level of closeness to the data which would make complete detachment even more difficult. The main problem with the realist position, however, is more fundamental: it promises direct access to the “real” world of the participant without providing any clear indication of how one can distinguish this “real” world from a “false” alternative world. Who is to be the arbiter?

The more relativist contextual position (King & Horrocks, 2010) states that meaning is context-dependent; context must therefore frame the analysis of how people experience their lives; it is the most important part of the data and endows the analysis with “wholeness”. This seemed relevant to my study as it factors in the precise cultural and historical context of the data. It would allow space to involve my subjectivity, and I would be aware of my own contribution to the data analysis.

The constructionist position (King & Horrocks, 2010) also stood out for me as it allows the researcher to critique the language used by participants and therefore “co-produce” knowledge. The researcher must therefore also be reflexive, which is important for me. The reader must be equally attentive to the language used by the participant.

My personal epistemological view

It is vital for IPA researchers to declare a personal epistemological stance for their research because the philosophical bases of qualitative research can impact the chosen research question as well as the way the data is collected and analysed (Willig, 2013). When conducting research, it is important to focus on the research paradigm, ontology and epistemology (Willig, 2013), all of which guide the

research process in terms of reality, truth, beliefs and assumptions (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). Ontology focuses on the philosophy of being as well as the nature of reality and how we engage in it. Epistemology, on the other hand, is the philosophy of knowledge and explores the relationship between the “knower” and the “would be knower” (Willig, 2013). In order to evaluate research meaningfully, researchers must state what they believe their research is going to produce, as epistemology is not just about what one knows, but about what we can know and what knowledge the research aims to create. Due to this, I will now highlight my personal epistemological stance for this study, defining my assumptions about the world, about people, and about the knowledge that this study aims to create.

The aim of my research was to achieve a deeper and better understanding of the experience of women who observe Jewish family purity laws. I am aware that understanding has two components: first, empathy or identification with a participant, and second, making sense of their experience (Smith and Osborn, 2003). As IPA expects and supports the involvement of the researcher’s own assumptions and expectations in the process of analysis (Smith, 1996), my own personal experiences will legitimately affect my empathy and identification as I analyse data. IPA acknowledges that the data produced is based on the researcher’s own assumptions and conceptions, which are needed for the process of data interpretation (Smith, 1996). Larkin et al. (2006) maintain that producing an experience requires an active interaction between researcher and participant.

The stance that felt right for me was contextual, as this theory suggests that all understanding is situational as well as context-dependent (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988): “different perspectives generate different insights into the same phenomenon” (Willig, 2001, p. 145). This stance understands and accepts that the researcher’s own personal and cultural experiences will have some sort of impact on the research and analysis.

Contextualism takes it as a given that a complex but meaningful analysis accepts the intricate relationship between the worlds of researcher and participant (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1996). The contextual constructionist approach therefore holds that it is impossible for the researcher to remain a “blank slate”, entirely devoid of personal assumptions (Best, 1995). Having experience of the same rules as my participants, I was aware from the beginning of my research that my own feelings might impact my perception and understanding of their experiences. The context, however, has so many dimensions, such as “linguistic, historic, ideographic and cultural differences [that] the researcher will have to make assumptions about some of these elements” (Best, 1995, p. 346). Willig (2008) believes that contextual constructionism is a strong underpinning for IPA and that results supported by evidence from the data are fully justified (Madill et al., 2000).

2.10 Procedures

Sampling and participants

As my very original idea was too conduct this research with males, and then males and females, all methods of recruitment were done on males and femals, after my pilot interview, that is discussed further on, my research question was edited and only targeted females.

Due to the nature of my research question, potential participants and recruiting methods were limited. Purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) was used and my inclusion criteria were as follows: participants must be Jewish women who had been married for over 1 year but not more than 5. The reason it was important that participants were married for at least one year was because they had to have a minimum level of experience of observing these laws. The reason they had to be married for no more than 5 years, was because the question is only looking at women's experiences within the first five years of marriage. Exclusion criteria included women who were in therapy, divorced, or not currently adhering to the Jewish laws of family purity. Following the recommendation of Smith and Osborne (2008) as to sample size, I obtained a sample of 8 female participants, aged between 23 and 30, selected chosen on a first-come, first-chosen basis. In other words, I selected the first eight suitable candidates for inclusion to present themselves.

From the beginning of the recruitment phase it was obvious that recruitment would be difficult and I therefore used a number of recruitment strategies to identify participants. A recruitment advertisement was created (Appendix A) and placed in many different locations where it was likely to be seen by married Jewish women. I also posted my advert, including details about the study, on a national Jewish website. Additionally, I placed fliers in synagogues and created posters to display in many Mikvahs (Jewish ritual baths).

In order to make recruitment easier, I also requested permission from my Rabbi to conduct this study, in the hope that this authorisation would encourage participants who might otherwise have been reluctant to share confidential information with me. As a further incentive, I offered participants a £25 WH Smith voucher in acknowledgement of their valuable cooperation.

Participants

Participants were eight Orthodox Jewish women who had been married for between 1 and 5 years. Their religious backgrounds varied, but their current religious and marital status was similar.

Materials

I included my email address so that potential volunteers could ask questions or volunteer themselves for the study. I responded to email queries with an information sheet (Appendix B) which outlined the purpose of the study, and all the ethical measures governing it. Those who then decided they would like to proceed were contacted by telephone to organise a date and time for the interview.

Interview schedule

A semi-structured interview (Smith & Osborn, 2008), based on a variety of pre-prepared open-ended questions, was conducted with each participant individually. Interviews were conducted in a flexible manner that allowed participants to shape and adapt the questions to match their own description of their experience of the phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews are a valuable tool of qualitative analysis as they retain the guidelines of an interview, while creating space for each participant to communicate what they feel is important (Smith, 1995).

Each interview took place in a room booked at City University London and lasted between 45 minutes to just over one hour. Although some interviews were only 45 minutes long, the material generated was rich and deep. This could be because participants felt the need to share something they were experiencing on a day-to-day basis.

At the beginning of each interview, I discussed the information sheet (Appendix B) and highlighted the opportunity for participants to ask questions. This ensured that participants were well informed and able to give consent; each participant appeared to understand the purpose of the study. I then gave the participant an informed consent form (Appendix C), on which they recorded their consent and permission to record. Finally, a demographic questionnaire told me how long each participant had been married, and their age.

Interviews began with a broad, open question asking participants what had motivated them to take part in the study. This question served as a 'warm-up', creating a comfortable environment in which participants felt they could contribute whatever they wanted; it also allowed them to respond spontaneously with the first information or experience that occurred to them (Smith & Eatough, 2006). The more sensitive questions were brought up later in the interview, after participants had had plenty of time to relax and get to know me (Smith & Dunworth, 2003).

After the initial question, I made sure to ask questions that gave prompts and direction, to allow participants to express their experiences of the different stage of keeping family purity laws. The areas I focused on included the experience of not touching, the experience of going to the Mikvah, the experience of proceeding from not touching to touching, and the converse experience of going from touching to not touching. The interview schedule is set out in Appendix D. All these questions helped

me gain insight into what their experiences and process of keeping these laws meant to them. I ensured that each interview concluded with a verbal and written debrief (Appendix D) and that participants had as much time to ask as many questions as they wished. The debrief form included contact details of counselling services that participants could contact if they experienced any stress arising from the interviews.

The audio recordings were placed onto a USB that could be opened only via password. The USB was stored in the safe at my home. When the research has been finalised and published the audio recordings will be destroyed.

Pilot Phase

The interview schedule was tested in a pilot interview with a male and female who responded to my advert. Both participants responded to questions that explored their experience of keeping family purity laws within the first five years of marriage. The same questions were used for the pilot and the present study. The reason a pilot interview was so important was because I was not sure whether an Orthodox Jewish male would be upfront with me about keeping such private laws. I also wanted to ensure that the wording of my questions was sensitive and the order in which I asked them was sequential. The pilot allowed me to analyse their replies and determine whether the information given by my female participant was more rich and detailed than that of the male participant. I found that even when prompted to speak about his own personal experiences, the male participant spoke more about what he assumed other people experienced rather than his own experience.

For example:

Researcher: How does it feel to not be able to touch your wife?

Participant: Many men find it hard to not touch their wives as males are a lot more physical than females.

I assume the data supplied by the female participant was richer because it is uncommon for Orthodox Jewish men to talk about such personal issues, especially to a woman; they may feel extra uncomfortable in this situation as it is considered immodest to discuss physical relationships with one's spouse speak with a member of the opposite sex. Although their Rabbis gave permission for them to do so, it is most likely outside a male participant's comfort zone, making data less accessible.

Holloway (1997) argues that pilot interviews are not needed in qualitative studies but this pilot was crucial for me as it showed me that I might not elicit enough information from a mixed-sex sample of participants to complete a study, which is why I decided to focus on female participants only. The pilot study also gave me insight into my interview skills, allowing for subsequent data collection to yield richer results. Although I was generalising my findings about males on one pilot interview, after

speaking to both my supervisor and the Rabbi, it was decided that it perhaps may be too much of a culture change for men to partake in this research with me being a female researcher. One option was to ask a male to interview the men. I was however reluctant to do that, as I wanted to be there to get the participants facial expression and body language in order to enrich my data as much as possible.

Transcribing

Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and as Smith and Dunworth (2003) suggest, close attention was given to non-verbal cues from participants (such as long pauses, facial expressions and laughter). The transcript was kept as close as possible to the dialogue, so long pauses or laughter are indicated and explained in the transcripts. Transcribing the data gave the researcher the experience of “re living” the interview, permitting re-engagement with the data on a deep level.

For the sake of confidentiality and anonymity, all names and identifying details were changed during the transcription process. A document listing the pseudonym allocated to each participant was compiled, but has been kept separately from the other research data; it will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Analytic Strategy

The data was analysed using IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2003), supplemented by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). Through participant narratives, IPA tries to probe deeply into the meaning of the participant’s world (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The analysis comprises many steps, from looking at the purely descriptive elements of the data, to analysing the actual language and metaphors used, analysing the relationships between different aspects of the same interview, and last, to recognise processes that featured in several interviews. These stages are described by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) as comprising a movement from interpretation of a “part” to interpretation of the “whole”.

In order to re-live the interview experience as much as possible, and to fully concentrate on the data, the interviews were listened to several times, then transcribed and read and studied twice. During the reading of the transcript, on the left hand side of the page I noted any thoughts, reflections or ideas that came immediately to mind (Willig, 2013). Comments made at this stage are “descriptive, linguistic and conceptual”, to help the researcher make sense of and understand participants’ accounts (Smith et al., 2009).

After the left column was completed, I embarked on the more in-depth and thought-focused analysis. Following each line of the transcript, I noted any themes, concepts and ideas on the right hand side of the page (Smith & Osborn, 2003). I made sure at this stage to stay as close to the meaning of the text as possible (Smith & Dunworth, 2003) while at the same time capturing the quality and meaning of

the participant's experiences (see Appendix G). As I felt there was insufficient space on the pages to present my thoughts, I created an excel spreadsheet, on which I placed the left-margin notes in the first column and my themes, concept and ideas in the second. The second column/right-hand margin of the transcript page commented on the descriptive part of the communication, the linguistic and conceptual features (Smith et al., 2009). The aim of the analysis on the right-hand side of the transcript and on the excel spreadsheet was to capture the essence and meaning of the participant's words. These notes were then abstracted to create emerging themes.

Once an interview was analysed, a list of preliminary themes was compiled, identifying superordinate themes. As themes and superordinate themes were collected, they were constantly checked against the transcript to ensure that they stayed as close as possible to the data. In order for each theme to be referenced back to the text, the superordinate themes were listed in a table, accompanied by textual quotations (See Appendix K).

This process was repeated for each interview. In order to amalgamate all eight pieces of analysis into a comprehensive overview, a cross-analysis was carried out. This was set out as a table listing all the themes and subordinate themes. The themes that recurred most frequently across all the participants were selected to create master themes that reflected the totality of participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). In addition to the frequency with which these themes appeared in the transcriptions, the other criterion for selection was the "richness of the particular passages that highlight the themes" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 75). This allowed the researcher to create another table of new subordinate themes and to identify fundamental themes that helped to create an analysis encompassing the common factors underlying differences of emphasis in participants' experiences.

After a re-evaluation of theme labels, a written narrative report was composed, to represent the participants' reports of their experiences as well as the researcher's interpretations of them. This report was supported by extracts from the data (Smith & Eatough, 2006).

Altogether, analysis was carried out through a considerable amount of interpretation, which involved looking at the descriptive, contextual and linguistic information gleaned from the participant, as well as a comparative analysis of different accounts by the same person. Finally, a table of master themes was compiled. Throughout the analytic procedure I took care to think of the data in many different ways, as well as being aware and reflexive of my own personal experiences and the potential impact of these on my analysis. The results and findings of the analysis will inevitably be made up of a fusion of interpretations by the researcher and the participant; the findings are the product of the researcher's attempt to understand the participant, who is in turn, at the same time, trying to make sense of their own experiences. This results in the 'double hermeneutics' mentioned above.

In common with most qualitative research, this study used a small sample of participants and its findings therefore cannot be generalised, nor are they transferable to other religious minority groups.

2.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were noted from the beginning of the study and the research proposal gained full ethical approval (Appendix E) from City University's Department of Psychology. As well as gaining ethical approval from the university, I also scrupulously observed the ethical guidelines adumbrated in the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009). By following these ethical guidelines, I ensured that my participants were safeguarded from any physical or psychological harm, respected each participant's dignity, and ensured that the study would be strictly confidential and that participants' identities would remain anonymous.

The crucial ethical issues were:

1) Informed consent

An informed consent form (Appendix C) was given to each participant, who read, understood and signed it before the interview took place. The informed consent form set out a clear review of the study's aims and structure, an outline of what the interview would entail, and a statement of the participant's rights of confidentiality and ability to withdraw at any point. The researcher's and supervisor's contact details were also included. As well as receiving the written consent form, participants were also verbally informed of the details of the study and of their rights. This was to ensure that they had ample time to decide whether they wanted to proceed to the interview, and to ask any questions they might have had.

2) Confidentiality

From the start to the end of the study, confidentiality was taken very seriously. The recorded interviews, consent forms and anything else that identified participants by name was kept in a locked safe in my home, to which I alone had had access. For transcribing purposes, all names were altered, together with any details that could lead a reader to identify the participant. All computer recordings were held on a password-locked computer.

3) Debriefing

At the beginning of the study I did not expect any physical or mental harm to accrue to my participants as a result of their participation in the study. At the same time, however, I knew I must not be naïve or, through complacency, ignore the slight possibility that emotional issues might arise during the course of the interview. In order to prepare for this eventuality, I took the precaution of debriefing my participants in a number of different ways. When the

interview was concluded, I made sure to ask participants how they felt, and gave each of them a list of psychological services and supports that they could contact by phone if they felt the need to do so. All this information was included in a debriefing form given to the participants (Appendix D). I also offered to send participants a copy of the study's findings, should they consider this of interest to themselves.

During the interview process, I was also aware that I was bringing up information that was personal and sensitive and that participants would most probably be unused to talking about this topic. I therefore took care not to press my participants to talk about anything they did not feel sufficiently comfortable to disclose. In order to make sure participants were completely comfortable I paid close attention to non-verbal cues that could potentially indicate emotional distress on their part.

2.12 Quality and Validity within IPA

Yardley (2000) and Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999) developed criteria for assessing the quality and validity of qualitative research, regardless of the chosen methodology. Yardley's (2000) four criteria are: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. These criteria, and how they have been used in the current study, are explained below.

Sensitivity to context

There is a need to remain sensitive to the theoretical context of the study (Yardley, 2000). This research has therefore reviewed a considerable body of previous research (see Introduction and Literature Review). I aimed to remain sensitive to the literature on this topic by examining and reviewing previous research that would allow me to identify gaps in the research area. Although I had prior theoretical understanding of this topic, I endeavoured to remain open to newly emerging data relevant to this topic. I also aimed to remain sensitive to the wider socio-cultural background of my participants, as it was important to consider how socio-cultural factors can impact participants' account and therefore, my analysis of their experience. Language (what Saussure calls 'parole', or personal language use, rather than 'langue', meaning normative grammar and vocabulary), culture and social exchanges can all play an important role in the exploration of a phenomenon. In order to account for this, the objectives and expectations of both researcher and participant (Yardley, 2000) were looked at in detail in the course of the discussion. This reflected the dynamics between the participant and the researcher. Sensitivity to participants' interiority was also maintained through the visible manifestation of empathy, the use of delicate or even euphemistic language, such as "intimate relations" rather than "sexual relations", and allowing participants to feel that they had control within the relationship with the interviewer. Understanding that there might be a power imbalance between researcher and the participant, I offered participants the choice of location and venue for the

interview, in order to encourage a more open relationship between us. I also retained sensitivity to context throughout the analysis. Sensitivity to raw material is noted by Smith et al. (2009), who propose using a ‘considerable number of verbatim extracts from the participant’s material to support the argument being made, thus giving participants a voice in the project and allowing the reader to check the interpretations being made’ (p. 180-181). In order to maintain sensitive to the data, quotations from the transcripts were used to confirm findings.

Commitment and rigour

“Commitment and rigour” refers to the thoroughness of the data collection and analysis (Yardley, 2000). Shinebourne (2011) argues that the process of IPA facilitates commitment throughout the research. Within this study I have maintained a commitment to accessing and engaging with participants in a respectful way, as well as a strong commitment to thorough analysis of the data. Rigour refers to “the thoroughness of the study, for example in terms of appropriateness of the sample to the question in hand, the quality of the interview and the completeness of the analysis” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 181). Within this study, I attempted to maintain academic and professional rigour through the formulation of questions designed to elicit a deep understanding of participants’ experiences. I also demonstrated rigour by supporting my findings and conclusions with appropriate quotations.

Transparency and coherence

As mentioned above, my epistemological stance influenced how I studied and interpreted the data. The research and analysis procedure will be explained in detail. In order to show how the data was analysed and how patterns were found, data quotations are displayed in the analytic account (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Peräkylä, 1997). In order to enable the quotations to be linked back to the transcript, I provided line numbers, page references and transcript pseudonyms. This will allow the reader to make their own judgement as to whether the analysis and interpretations fit the data (Yardley, 2000). Supervisor and peer analysis helped to ensure that the themes inscribe an objective view of the participants’ experiences. The Appendix presents an example of a copy of an annotated transcript. I have also included the table of themes I created for the transcript, together with a table of larger themes for all transcripts, derived from the cross-case analysis. This will ensure that the transparency and rationality of the analysis are clear.

Impact and importance

Yardley (2000) calls this ‘the decisive criterion by which any piece of research must be judged’ (p. 223). In practice, this means that independently of a research study’s validity, its impact and

importance also matter greatly. As an IPA researcher, my aim was to provide therapists with insight into how Jewish women within an Orthodox Jewish marriage live and experience their lives and relationships. This is a valuable subject for investigation, since it currently suffers from a dearth of research. This study could therefore offer a deeper understanding of the experience of those individuals who faithfully observe the complex lifestyle rules of Orthodox Judaism. It is hoped that the study's findings will give therapists a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of Jewish religious experience and of the impact of these rules on newly married Jewish women.

2.13 How my Own Experience Can Impact my Research

Being aware of one's own experiences means being conscious of how "our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research" (Willig, 2001, p. 10). That is why reflecting on my own experience is so important to my research.

When I began this research, I was aware that having observed the family purity laws myself for three years, there would be many factors I would have to confront and consider. I wanted to be aware of what it would be like to hear other women's experiences and whether these would be similar to, or different from mine. Whether their experiences proved to be similar or different to mine, I was worried that I would respond to them and interpret them incorrectly. As someone who has kept the same laws, it would be very difficult for me to maintain an objective, detached stance when conducting the research. I also wondered whether participants would offer different answers if they had known that I was a religiously practicing Jewish married woman. I felt the need to keep my background to myself in order to reduce desirability effects. I did not want them to think that as I have been through the rules myself, I perhaps would be more likely to judge them. It was inevitable that my own personal experiences would impact my interpretation and presentation of the data. My experiences of marriage could also impact the way I led the interviews and my choice of questions. It was crucial that I constantly reflected on these issues throughout my research.

When analysing the data, I needed to be aware that I must not focus excessively on information corresponding to my own personal experience. When conducting the interviews, I also needed to be aware that my questions were not prompted by my own interests, concerns, questions and feelings. This constant self-scrutiny ensured that the analysis and data was as unbiased as possible. IPA does accept the impact of our selves on the research and that is impossible to be truly 'unbiased'. On the other hand, however, having been through the same experiences as my participants, I believe I was able to offer them a more empathic response, show them that I understood them better and, by doing so, enhance our relationship. This in turn might allow them to be more open.

As a specialist in CBT, my more common approach, I believe this awareness can impact the way I interpreted my data. If the same data were analysed by another researcher, working within a different methodological approach, they might well have interpreted the data differently.

In order to try to resolve the issues that might arise due to my own personal experience, I kept a detailed reflective diary and took part in a self-reflexive interview, conducted by a colleague. I wanted to understand my personal view of the process and be fully aware of my own experiences prior to the study. This was extremely helpful because until I had verbalised my own experiences and feelings, I had experienced them only in the most inchoate and unprocessed form. By deconstructing my subconscious and hitherto unrecognized feelings, I was able to generate an in-depth understanding of my personal view and learnt how it felt to be asked personal questions about my marriage and sex life. This taught me that when questioning participants, I needed to take the utmost care to be truly sensitive. The reflexive interview was somewhat uncomfortable at the time, but I afterwards felt a sense of relief that I had been able to create a clear understanding of my feelings about my practices.

Conducting this study has been very strenuous and challenging for me, both physically and mentally. It has taken a lot of time and effort, which has been difficult to co-ordinate with running a family home, being on placement, working, and attending university. The eight interviews, all of which were around one hour long, generated a lot of data, the analysis of which was time-consuming, strenuous, emotionally draining and intellectually complex. All this must have had an impact on my findings and in order to keep track of my many challenges, I kept a reflexive diary throughout my research, focussing on my feelings, thoughts and beliefs, and how these could impact my data and interpretations.

In order to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the study, I have also reflected on how inter-subjective factors have impacted the data collection and analysis. Drawing on the hermeneutic process (Finlay, 2003), I was able to constantly reflect on my own experiences as a researcher in alignment with my research topic (Gadamer, 1975). I also took care to engage in a lot of peer and supervisor discussions with people who have chosen not to observe the family purity laws. This is because they were able to be more detached than myself and have the ability to recognise and highlight any biases of which I might have been unaware. Even granting that their viewpoints, like mine, were necessarily perspectival, it was valuable to see my topic through an entirely different lens.

Chapter 3 - Analysis

3.1 Introduction

As mentioned above, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was chosen as an approach to obtain in-depth understanding of the experiences of Orthodox Jewish women who adhere to the family purity rules. Each case was analysed in detail, both individually and collectively. Although each experience is unique, the analysis identified common themes, facilitating a detailed insight into the Orthodox Jewish woman's experience of keeping family purity laws.

Listening, reading and re-reading the interview transcripts elicited many emerging themes, and the transcript analysis generated a large amount of rich data. Identifying and linking common themes can create more meaning and deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the women's experiences.

As the interpretation emerged, I faced choices in the prioritization of themes. I chose to focus on themes that answer the research question in the greatest possible depth, covering areas that seem to capture the Orthodox women's experience of keeping family purity laws. This chapter takes the reader through these themes. Sub-themes that emerged from four super-ordinate themes will also be discussed. The superordinate themes include: **“the power of dissonance”**, **“the emotional juxtaposition”**, **“the phenomenon of relational space”** and **“desire for a meaningful attachment”**. These superordinate themes were chosen to structure the data as they cover the participant responses most revealing and relevant to the research question. There is, nevertheless, considerable overlap between the superordinate themes (Smith et al, 2009); some similarity between themes should therefore be expected.

I have refrained from using theoretical literature in the results section as I did not want to detract from participants' lived experience, the links between them, and my interpretations. In trying to create a genuine representation of the phenomena, I have interpreted participants' accounts through reflecting on the cross-thematic connections, attempting to achieve IPA's aim of a “double hermeneutic” (Smith et al., 2009).

Each theme will be explored in turn, and supported by participant quotations. Pauses are indicated by an ellipsis: “. . .” and omissions by an ellipsis enclosed in square brackets: “[. . .]”. Page and line references are taken from the transcripts and pseudonyms are used to ensure participant anonymity.

3.2 Table of superordinate and subordinate themes

<u>Super-Ordinate Themes</u>	<u>Subordinate Themes</u>
1. The Power of Dissonance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•a) Anxiety and Pressure•b) Guilty Cycle
2. The emotional Juxtaposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•a) Reduced to a Robot•b) The Excitement of a Newlywed
3. The Phenomenon of Relational Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•a) Closeness Distance Dance•b) Intrusion V. Space
4. Desire for a Meaningful Attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•a) Hope•b) Purity•c) Spirituality

3.3 Superordinate Theme 1: The Power of Dissonance

This superordinate theme comprises of two subordinate themes, encapsulating participants' subjective experience of the dissonance they face in their experiences of observing family purity rules. This theme captures participants' ambivalence and dissonance as they are caught between their own desire, that of their husbands, and the rules. This superordinate theme comprises two subordinate themes. "Anxiety and Pressure" captures participants' difficult experiences under pressure to do something they may not necessarily want to do. "Guilty cycle" captures their experience of guilt about some or all aspects of their experience of observing the family purity laws. The guilt often resulted from their ambivalent relationship to laws that did not always sit well with them.

3.3.1 Subordinate Theme a) Anxiety and Pressure

Participants commonly felt pressured to do something they were reluctant to do. This subordinate theme uses examples of participants' feeling pressurised to engage in sexual relations with their husbands. The women explain that the laws establish a routine: a period without sexual relations is followed by a period with sexual relations, followed by another period without sexual relations. The women comment that during the 'sexual relation period' they experience high anxiety and pressure to 'perform' and 'engage'. Secondly, the subordinate theme explores women's stress within their

experience of preparing for and attending the Mikvah. Chana typically feels pressured to engage in sexual relations:

“when we are touching it’s also strained because you have an expectation even if you’re really tired to like, you know, be intimate with each other because you’re forced to in those two weeks” (Chana, 485-487).

Chana’s experience captures the twin, mutually reinforcing, pressures of time and sexual expectation. Chana feels pressured even when she is allowed to engage in intercourse; because she is expected to enjoy this intimate relation with her husband, she feels obliged to perform to expectation. Chana seems to experience a lack of freedom; it feels unnatural for her at this specific time to engage in intercourse but she feels she must, regardless of her desires. Her strong use of the word ‘forced’ implies a sense of coercion that at the very least places a strain, or a distance, between husband and wife. Forcible sexual relations naturally result in feelings of violation, intrusion, and powerlessness, which is the impression conveyed by Chana’s account of her experience.

Emma feels pressurised to have sexual relations. Listening to Emma and several other women, I formed an image of feasting and fasting. Before a fast one may eat plenty, knowing one will shortly be deprived of food. However, having to eat before a fast can be stressful because it is a ‘last chance’ for a considerable time. Emma explains her experience of ‘pressure’ to have sexual relations:

““I mean because you can’t do it during those two weeks and then the next week’s a lot of pressure so . . . I mean it doesn’t take like a wild psychologist to know that when you’re feeling really pressurised” (Emma, 771-774).

Emma finds the experience of having to have sexual relations at a set time makes her feel powerless and trapped. Because sexual relations are mandatory during these set times, Emma finds herself obliged to do something she might not want to do. Emma chooses to follow the rules, yet paradoxically feels trapped by them, leaving her with ambivalent feelings. She worries that this experience of entrapment is so strong that it is perhaps obvious enough to be noticeable by her husband and others around her. Emma makes a direct causal link: naturally, if you do this to people, or if people keep the rules, they will feel there is no escape and pressurised to behave in a certain way. Emma feels it is obvious that she has no space to act – or refrain from acting - as she wishes. Her own needs and desires are not consulted. This elicits feelings of anger and frustration in Emma, to the extent that she can’t imagine anyone who keeps the rules feeling any differently from her. Emma’s sarcastic tone at this point expresses how strong and deep these feelings are for her and must be for anyone who keeps the rules. This suggests that Emma’s anger is directed at the law rather than at her

husband. It is the law that causes women like her too suffer stress, and her ultimate frustration is with the nature of the rules she has voluntarily chosen to follow, rather than the actual frustration and misery she experiences herself. I picked up on Emma's heavily sarcastic tone at this point, which stressed how obvious this link was to her. This experience of pressure due to feasting and fasting was also experienced by Sarah:

“if I know I'm getting my period in a few days I will be like oh, I have to fit one in rather than oh, I really want to. Um and I feel . . . I just feel it . . . it just comes with a lot of pressure and anxiety” (Sarah, 422-424)

Like Emma, Sarah does not feel free to act according to her desires; she feels controlled and bound by either or both of nature (her period) or by the freedom-denying rules. Sarah's anticipation of being prohibited from having sex once her period has begun creates pressure to have sexual relations beforehand. Sarah evidently feels that she herself, and by extension her relationship, are restricted by the laws. It is almost as though Sarah lacks power over her sexual life and that there is an element of semi-unwilling, or at least, grudging, submission in her compliance with the laws. She appears to experience anxiety due to the knowledge that within a short time a sexual restriction will be imposed, so she needs to engage in sexual relations when the law dictates rather than when she herself wishes. Following the feast/famine metaphor, Sarah feels she needs to 'fill' up on sex knowing she will soon lack it.

Layla explains that the pressure to have sex is felt not only by her, but also by her husband:

“it's not particularly spontaneous or exciting in that way and I think that all comes from it like this anxiety and pressure between both of us because it, yeah, it's both of us at the end of the day” (Layla, 431-433).

Layla feels that she and her husband jointly experience a dismal lack of spontaneity in their sexual relations; the failure to behave instinctively creates stress for both of them. Mentioning her husband shows that Layla experiences a joint responsibility for the lack of arousal and passion she so much desires. Layla comments that because they both want their sexual relations to be more exciting, they experience a tension between the two of them. This pressure is noted by Maya in terms of an experience of enjoying not being 'allowed' to touch her husband, a revealing comment that makes clear that when she does touch her husband she does experience pressure:

“in those two weeks there's less pressure, you know, in this day and age um, you know, um let's say if you're feeling tired or, you know, you just want an early . . . and you don't feel like

the pressure that, you know, if you're not having sex like it's, you know, it's sometimes a bit more calm" (Maya, 103-107)."

Maya's experience differs from that of the other women; she feels that she has two weeks in which to enjoy her own space, time and freedom to do whatever she wishes. Maya feels the laws give her an experience of power and control, setting aside time in which she can do as she pleases rather than be controlled by her husband. Maya feels that without this legally sanctioned break she would feel constantly pressured by her husband. This free time helps her feel more relaxed and in control of herself, creating the space to get in touch with her inner self and just be.

The women also spoke about their stressful experience of preparing for the Mikvah, something they evidently don't enjoy. Maya's experience is typical.

"quite stressful sometimes um because, you know, it's dark already and it's cold and you . . . you've got to get there and, you know, you've got your wet hair afterwards and you just kind of want to get back inside and um yeah so sometime it is stressful" (Maya, 239-242)

Maya experiences this process as difficult, unpleasant and inconvenient, but feels forced to undergo it regardless, resulting in a pressurised experience. Although it is meant to connect her to her husband, she feels the stressful elements prevent it from doing so. Stressed makes engagement difficult; the stress Maya describes suggest it could be more, rather than less, difficult for her to physically engage with her husband. Juliette describes her experience as inducing quiet resentment:

"I had to sit for 45 minutes with my nails and some nail varnish remover and take this thing off and then like hardly had time to eat my dinner and that I was resentful about and that . . . not . . . nothing to do with my husband just more to do with like the institution of the mikveh kind of requiring that" (Juliette, 542-547)

The laws prevent Juliette from looking after herself and she puts the rules ahead of her personal hunger, perhaps making her feel undermined. Although Juliette mentions that her resentment is not against her husband, he may experience it indirectly, since it is he with whom she must engage when she returns home. Juliette may mean that it is not the law, but the resentment it engenders, that makes her feel bitter, hostile and angry because it requires an unequal act of self-denial. Whether originating in the laws, herself, or her husband, there is no equality in the relationship because it is her responsibility to prepare and go to the Mikvah even if this means missing a meal. Her husband is under no such compulsion.

All the participant quoted above describe the experience of feeling pressured into doing something they don't feel comfortable doing, whether this is going to the Mikvah, preparing for the Mikvah or engaging in sexual relations. It would be interesting to explore participants' rationale or motives for doing this – does the pressure comes from the rules, their husbands or perhaps even themselves? Or is it a combination of all three? These women do feel anxious and pressured in the weeks when they are allowed to touch their husbands as it means they feel pressure to have sexual relations. Orthodox Judaism often expects obedience to rules with which one may not feel comfortable, and this is especially true of women. It may be that these women have been conditioned from early childhood to obey what may seem to some an anachronistically patriarchal lifestyle. This religious indoctrination leads to the “guilty cycle” whereby participants feel helpless, caught between a rock and a hard place.

3.3.2 Subordinate Theme b) Guilty Cycle

This theme explores participants' struggle with the experience of guilt that they believe results from keeping the laws. Their accounts express guilt that it's their body that undergoes the period, so it's their fault they can't touch their husband. The women also express guilt arising from a natural feeling of wanting to touch their husband knowing they aren't allowed to do so, together with guilty experiences of different desires from those of their husbands. Sarah's feeling of pressure is accompanied by deep guilt:

“I think it creates a bit of a guilty cycle that you feel kind of always guilty. You feel guilty when you're on your period that you're not having it at all . . . seven days after and you feel guilty when you're pure and if the days you're not doing it it's like oh why are you wasting days?” (Sarah, 406-411)

Sarah constantly feels she should be having sexual relations and if she isn't it is a bad thing for which she is responsible. Sarah expresses that the routine of the law creates this feeling of guilt that they are not having sexual relations at all stages in the relationship cycle. She worries intensely about this entirely unjustified sense of wrongdoing. Sarah's experience captures a feeling that when she is not having sexual relations with her husband on days she is allowed to, she is somehow misusing, under-appreciating, or wasting these days. Sarah's repetitive of the word 'guilt' expresses her deep level of responsibility about this.

Jodi also experiences guilt in two ways: first, as she is the one that bleeds, she therefore feels responsible and second, she experiences creeping guilt if she doesn't have sexual relations when she is allowed to:

“I just feel a bit guilty like it’s my body that’s the reason why it’s doing it and that’s why we’re not touching and that’s why sometimes I feel a bit low [. . .] You sort of feel like you have to do it and if you don’t perform you feel really guilty because you know that’s another day lost” (Jodi, 159-161, 465-467)

Jodi takes personal responsibility and blame for being a menstruating woman, without perhaps considering that unless she were to do so she would be unable to bear children. This heavy feeling of responsibility makes her dejected and extremely upset. She experiences guilt during the times she is permitted to have sexual relations, but attributes these feelings to a different source: she feels obligated to have sexual relations with her husband and guilty if she neglects what seems more like a duty than a pleasure.

Chana discusses experiencing guilt in different terms. She is angry that she feels guilty for wanting to touch her husband during the period she is ‘impure’:

“I’m annoyed with that that I feel guilt about wanting to touch my husband and enjoying that moment, I shouldn’t feel guilt but I do” (Chana, 741-748).

Chana is irritated that the rules cause her to feel this guilt and believes she doesn’t deserve to feel this way. She feels her experience is unjustified and her sense of guilt unfair. Yet her respect for the rules makes her feel bad for having a natural feeling of wanting to touch her husband and this strongly irritates her. Emma expresses feelings of guilt about her desires differing from those of her husband but feels that is explained by the fact she is the one that bleeds:

“Um but I felt a bit bad for my husband because maybe he . . . he wanted to keep it and he was like ‘maybe we should try’ and I just felt like well I’m the one who’s getting the period, I’m the one who’s bleeding, I’m the one who doesn’t . . . who wants . . . who doesn’t want to keep them, I’m the one who wants to be touched and be cuddled and maybe he didn’t so I remember feeling quite bad” (Emma, 181-186).

Emma’s experience made her feel slightly inadequate to her husband; she is the one who finds the rules more difficult to keep and she feels responsible and accountable for wanting to break them.

Sarah feels she suffers more than her husband because she is the one who suffers a period, and she is more tactile than he is. Her experience is therefore more stressful. Emma’s repeated mention of her different attitude to the rules from that of her husband betrays her conflicted feelings about their different experience. She describes wanting a physical comfort he doesn’t seem to need himself, and her consequent feeling of guilt or rejection.

In summary this theme highlights participants' struggle to cope with feelings of 'guilt' resulting from observing family purity laws. This guilt is coupled with deep experiences of self-directed self-blame that reveals a cognitive process of judgment and self-condemnation perhaps shaped by the religious ideology in which they have been educated.

In the first superordinate theme I have explained personal challenges re dissonance that the participants highlighted about their experience of observing the laws. These experiences are expressed in terms of anxiety, pressure and guilt. Other emotions were also experienced, as explained below.

3.4 Superordinate Theme 2: The Emotional Juxtaposition

This superordinate theme, Emotional Juxtaposition, will explore participants' contradictory experiences of feeling routine and robotic and new and exciting. Being "reduced to a robot" meant their desires being controlled by the external forces of the laws. The women describe the difficulties associated with these feelings and how they deal with them. The second subordinate theme, "the excitement of a newlywed" encapsulates their experience of excitement. Although the rules are oppressive, they also conduce to an excitement these women believe they might not otherwise have experienced.

3.4.1 Subordinate theme a) Reduced to a robot

In this subordinate theme, I explore participants' experience of, and regret about, the laws rendering their relationships dull and monotonous:

"you do get used to not being able to do it and then all of a sudden you have to do it and you . . . and you sort of feel like not a robot but like you don't want to have to do it at a certain time and it does make you feel a bit structured and you don't want it to be like that, you want it to be spontaneous" (Jodi 491-495).

Jodi feels forced to have sexual relations simply because she has just returned from the Mikvah. Her term 'robot' reveals a feeling that she is expected to switch her sexual desires on and off mechanically, like a robot under the control of the rules. Hence she feels unable to experience genuine excitement or even have the freedom to be herself and do as she pleases when she pleases. Jodi is expressing a lack of control and a feeling of powerless due to being governed by the rules.

Chana concurs:

“it happens every single month of my entire marriage for the like past four years, like it’s not different to me, it’s not actually not that exciting because I know exactly what’s going to happen every month” (Chana, 379-382).

Knowing she will be having sexual relations with her husband every month makes Chana feel powerless; she feels the rules have destroyed the excitement of her marital sexual relations, taking control of her marriage, and reducing the stimulation and thrill of sexual intimacy. Chana’s repetition of the phrase ‘every month’ indicates her frustration about the predictability of her sexual relations. Her language also inscribes a strong sense of entrapment, exemplified by absolutes such as ‘every’, ‘entire’ and ‘exactly’:

“even the same night it’s exactly the same so I even organise tutoring never to be on a Thursday because I know that either I’m going to be cooking or I’m going to be at mikveh that is my . . . that is how I’ve operated my world and that is rid . . . ridiculous” (Chana, 388-391).

As with Jodi, Chana’s word ‘operated’ expresses the feeling that her life is robotic. Chana feels submissive and controlled by these laws; her life is organised around these laws, rather than vice versa. As Chana was speaking, I became aware that the process of freely verbalizing her frustration was clarifying for the first time the absurd extent to which these rules had come to dominate her life. It was as if Chana suddenly realized the implications of her slavish adherence to these rules and had only now acquired the self-awareness to understand her own resentment; although she follows protocol, it doesn’t sit well with her. Although Chana obeys the rules, it appears she is now questioning why she is doing so. The term ‘ridiculous’ also shows Chana questioning the ideological foundations of rules that deny her the natural joys of married life and preventing her from being in touch with her feelings and desires. At this point Chana appeared to be in a confused state.

In summary, participants felt that observing the rules takes a toll on their marriages, denying them an aspect of their marriage they desire and believe they are entitled to. This frustrated desire for more spontaneity in their marriages and lives causes them great distress. The feeling that they lack free will to do as they please is very claustrophobic for them. Interestingly, however, this frustration with the rules was balanced by the experience of excitement elicited by other aspects of the law. This brings me onto my next theme, “The Excitement of a Newlywed”.

3.4.2 Subordinate theme b) The Excitement of a Newlywed

Most participants experienced a paradoxical overlap in the themes of reduction to a robot, and deep excitement, often expressed as the ‘honeymoon’ experience - the excited feeling of being newly married. All participants spoke of experiencing this exciting newlywed experience after reconnecting with their husband after a period of being forbidden to touch. They also explore their experience in the light of their belief that this experience would be impossible without the prior period of enforced abstinence. The belief that this exciting experience results from observing the laws makes observing the laws bearable:

“because I do feel like if we were touching the whole time it would . . . it would lose its spark and, you know, when we are touching again like that spark is definitely there and, you know, you feel like newly-weds again” (Maya, 192-194)

Maya’s reflective exploration expresses the belief that it is the restriction that creates the experience of excitement and novelty. Maya explains it in the sense of a long-term relationship; she feels abstinence reignites her sexual desire for him. She feels the laws create an excitement, enabling her to keep and guard the novelty of touch. It is as if these laws act as a means for Maya to preserve the feeling of the newness of the novice she so much appreciates and desires. The repetition of the metaphor ‘spark’ creates a visual image of colourful fireworks and excitement that I believe serves as a perfect analogy for Maya’s feelings of deep excitement about her experience of sexual relations with her husband.

Jodi similarly speaks of the ‘magic’ excitement of her relationship:

“In the beginning it is like magical and it is really exciting but then it’s also nice to know that you can just routinely cuddle and just be in a normal like relationship again” (Jodi, 453-454)

Jodi describes her experience as mystical, almost otherworldly or surreal. However, she adds that there can be reality and normality to this mystical feeling. Jodi’s experiences appear contradictory: she had previously mentioned feeling restricted and controlled by the laws, but here she expresses the excitement and magic they generate. It could be that during the periods of obligatory abstinence Jodi feels controlled in that she can’t yield to her desires and is restricted from just being. Being able to touch is normal to Jodi, and the natural, right condition of her relationship, so it is this regular daily routine she so badly misses and therefore appreciates so much when it is restored to her. Like Maya, she expresses that the hardship of being forbidden to touch is worth it because it is followed by an experience of excitement:

“we can touch again and that’s a really nice feeling to have so I know that everything’s worth it in the end” (Maya, 247-250).

This comment reminded me of the fasting/feasting metaphor noted above. Maya prizes the connection with her husband so highly, she is perhaps willing to undergo these difficult laws and experiences of abstinence for the sake of the pleasure of reuniting with her husband.

Juliette values the excitement of ‘fast and feast’, feeling that if she didn’t fast she wouldn’t enjoy the pleasures of the feast:

“think what I imagine is if we didn’t do it like that there may still be periods in our marriage where we wouldn’t have sex for two weeks but then the time we would wouldn’t be like this exciting event that we’ve been anticipating” (Juliette, 341-344).

I could see and hear Juliette imagining how different her experiences would be if she didn’t keep the rules, her facial expression changing as she ponders the thrill she might miss if she were not self-bound by these rules. Juliette’s face lights up and she smiles as she talks about the excitement of eagerly awaiting to touch her husband:

“every month is a bit like the first time you touch a bit, not over-dramatically, like I know a Rabbi who used to say it was like the honeymoon every month which I guess you could say” (Juliette, 411-413)

Juliette’s reflective analysis gives an impression of joyous renewal. It reminds me of how the excitement stirred by the purchase of new clothes so rapidly gives way to indifference. These rules, comments Juliette, allow the novelty of touching her husband to remain intact. Humans quickly become accustomed and indifferent to the familiar; the rules may therefore serve to preserve the joy of marriage by refreshing the initial wonder and novelty of the honeymoon period, averting both tedium and the ‘seven-year itch’. Juliette implies that far from being unnatural, the rules are in tune with basic human psychological needs.

In summary, participants experienced strong feelings of excitement about reuniting with their husbands. They shared a common experience of magical excitement following a difficult period of abstinence. In a way, they were voicing the familiar saying that there is no reward without effort.

3.5 Superordinate Theme 3: The Phenomenon of Relational Space

The following superordinate theme, Relational Space, seeks to express participants' attempt to make sense of their position and their feelings in relation to space or closeness to their husbands. The first superordinate theme, "Closeness-Distance Dance" explores their experiences of either feeling close to and/or distant from their husbands. Like the previous theme, this superordinate portrays participants experiencing paradoxical feelings but in this case, about their feelings in relation to their relationship and the rules. The second subordinate theme, "Intrusion v. Space", although sounding similar to 'Closeness-Distance Dance', differs in that intrusion which could be mistaken for closeness is a type of closeness participants do not enjoy; it makes them feel that their husbands are negatively encroaching on them. The 'space' part of this subordinate theme could be seen as similar to the 'distance' of the previous subordinate theme. However, it is different in that it explores participants' enjoyment of the space from their spouses, rather than the feeling of powerlessness portrayed in the distance theme. Both themes explore how participants experience relational space and both highlight the paradoxical experiences encountered at different stages of the relational cycle.

3.5.1 Subordinate theme a) Closeness-Distance Dance

This subordinate theme explores participants' experience of feeling distant at some times and closeness at others. Most commented that when they are forbidden to touch their husbands they feel lonely and distanced from them. Some expressed this experience as feeling angry and low; others found the experience personally offensive. For many, however, these negative feelings of distance were enmeshed with the positive experience of greater closeness to their husbands because of their shared observation of the rules. Different participants experienced closeness at different times of the cycle, although all felt distant in the part of the cycle when touch is prohibited. Jodi expresses how inability to touch her husband made her feel really bad about herself:

"you don't want to talk about your day you just want to be . . . feel loved and it . . . it makes you feel a bit angry and just unwanted [. . .] you're both almost sort of angry . . . you like tweak your brain to think well you know you're doing this for the right reason but it's just . . . it's just difficult because it just makes you feel like um like it's just . . . it's just frustrating 'cause you just want to have the comfort the whole time [. . .] touch you in a way that makes you feel like you're like attractive and sometimes you don't get that and it makes you feel a bit like low about yourself and your appearance and like, yeah" (Jodi, 58-60, 588-594, 644-648).

When permitted only verbal communication with her husband, Jodi feels less desired than she would if they were allowed physical contact. This experience leaves Jodi feeling resentful and rejected. She and her husband have a shared technique to deal with the pain: they try to change their thought process. Jodi's word 'tweak' implies a mechanical, rather than a spontaneous, alteration. Perhaps Jodi means that she and her husband try to 'mechanically tweak' their automatic thoughts to try to be more positive. Although she is able to do this, it is a long process which takes time and effort. Jodi has tried to mechanically direct part of her brain to engage in more positive cognitive thinking, but her affective experience is not under her control and she still suffers from the difficulty of keeping to the rules. Despite her best efforts, Jodi cannot suppress her feelings of pressure and stress; observing the rules is really gruelling for her because she is unable to find the relaxation and peace she desires. Jodi wants to connect with her husband in a way that makes her feel appealing and irresistible but keeping the laws rob her of these feelings, leaving her forlorn, despite her vain attempts to 'tweak' her thoughts mechanically. Perhaps Jodi's expectation of immediate change is unrealistic. Although this experience is difficult for her, she also says:

“talk things through and it makes you understand each other better and just strengthens your relationship in that way [. . .] just think that it strengthens every single part of your relationship and . . . and it . . . it gives you the opportunity to . . . to tweak every part of your relationship (Jodi, 9-10, 600-602)

Jodi reiterates the word 'tweak' but instead of referring to her thought processes she now applies it to her relationship, in the sense of a minor adjustment, the literal meaning of 'tweak'. Jodi suggests that this would involve sitting with her husband and talking about their relationship and changing or enhancing it. It is as though Jodi would find it hard to talk to her husband and readjust her relationship if she didn't have these rules that create the space for her to do that. The rules give Jodi an opportunity to work on her relationship which she believes she might otherwise not have had, though she gives no reason why she believes the rules are a prerequisite of relational intimacy or confidentiality. Jodi expresses a contradictory experience of the rules as both liberating and constricting, enabling closeness within her relationship yet also a painful distance. She appears unaware of the contradiction and if it is a paradox, she does not attempt to reconcile it.

Maya expresses similar feelings:

“it definitely gets us closer. I find that each month that, you know, I go to the mikveh and then I come back, you know, and we're closer as a couple and our relationship is getting better [. . .] I think that not only does it strengthen your relationship but, you know, you're . .

. you get . . . really get to know each other on a different level which is really important for a marriage, especially communication” (Maya, 299-301, 418-421).

Maya may mean that her relationship deepens every time she goes to the Mikvah to purify herself. It is as if she defines the relationship in dynamic terms, as a process rather than as a fixed, stable and unchanging phenomenon. During the period of not touching she experiences a process of focusing on what matters and feels this positively develops her relationship. Maya’s words explain that perhaps she sees her relationship in terms of levels which invokes the image of a hierarchy on which she believes her relationship can be ranked. Without the rules Maya feels she wouldn’t have the deep connection with her husband that gives their relationship a ‘high level’ ranking and she values the rules accordingly. It is almost as if she is attributing her satisfyingly close relationship with her husband to the rules rather than to their personal ‘chemistry’, effort, or contribution to maintaining the relationship.

Sarah speaks of distancing herself from her husband in order to protect herself from undesirable feelings:

“I knew if my husband wanted to keep to the laws it wasn’t to be offensive to me or to upset me but I couldn’t help but see it as that like I saw it as offensive that why . . . why don’t you want to touch me or why do you find it so easy to keep the rule [. . .] I cried. Um I think I isolated myself, I went like to . . . to my room alone, I always went early to bed so that I would just be by myself because I felt if anyway I’m.. I’m immo . . . I’m feeling pushed away, I might as well push myself away ra . . . so it’s in my hands rather than feeling it from someone else” (Sarah, 59-64, 69-73).

Despite knowing the reasons for her husband not touching her, Sarah still cannot control her feelings of being personally dismissed and insulted by him, perhaps leading her to feel that she is unworthy of being loved. Sarah understands that her reaction is illogical as she knows why her husband is not touching her, but she remains puzzled why, knowing these reasons, she is still so wounded. This indicates a tension or ambiguity in her feelings about the rules, manifested in an incongruence between her feelings and thoughts. Sarah feels insulted that her husband is able to keep the rules perhaps more easily than she can; she may wonder whether her desire is stronger than his. The part of her that wants to be desired more by her husband, combined with the feeling of being less desirable to him than he is to her, results in her feeling powerless and abandoned. In order to regain a sense of power and to be more in control of her feelings, Sarah explains, she physically separates herself, giving her the power to reject him before he can reject her.

Natalie speaks of her experience of being physically distant from her husband and how this distance is a challenge and a struggle for her:

“it is difficult and it is very frustrating when you want to, you know, as I . . . I guess as I said previously all you want is a gesture and all you want is to hug and that kiss, that’s what makes it really difficult to struggle through and, you know, you think let’s slip that one time and let’s just, you know, what’s a kiss, what’s a hug, it’s not going to be harmful” (Natalie, 128 -132).

Not being allowed to be physically close to her husband captures Natalie’s experience of disappointment and punishment for wanting something forbidden. She feels she is not asking or desiring too much, but even her small desires to be close to her husband, which feels so natural to her, are not ‘allowed’. Natalie may imply, consciously or otherwise, that she does not understand the rules or their rationale, which makes observance all the more difficult. Natalie describes this miserable state of pain, ignorance and resentment in ways that suggest she experiences life as a battle against her own desires. She is perhaps also debating whether yielding to her desires and suffering the consequences would be more or less painful than struggling to contain them. Natalie’s possibly unconscious resentment that her natural, instinctive desires are prohibited can be seen in her comment that that she cannot see the harm in touching her husband. She evidently feels frustrated and trapped in a no-win situation that is all the more distressing because it relates to the most intimate aspect of her private life.

Emma spoke about her difficulties in being distanced from her husband due to bleeding after she had sexual relations with him for the first time:

“I’d never done it with anyone or been vulnerable in that way at all with anyone, I just remember feeling like so . . . I’ve never felt so vulnerable and like uncomfortable and embarrassed and in a way dirty I guess and that’s the time where I needed like his physical aff . . . assurance and affirmation like “oh it’s OK like you’re . . . it’s OK what just happened.” (Emma, 106-111)

Emma’s intense tone here reveals the depth of her distress. Sexual intercourse is usually meant to be an act of love and although a woman usually does bleed after her hymen is broken, Emma explains it is not only this bleeding that makes her feel unclean or stained, but the sexual act itself. Sarah might feel that she is being chastised for being a woman; sex makes her feel unsafe and unprotected, and in need of emotional support. By contrast, Emma feels her husband is unable to give her the reassurance and support she needs because of the laws. Having sexual relations was traumatic for Emma, who craves her husband’s comforting physical touch; being denied this by the laws could lead Emma to

feel unvalued and uncared for. Her strong reference to the word ‘dirty’ perhaps reflects an ideological religious training that reinforces patriarchal expectations of women as either ‘madonnas’, too pure to enjoy sex, or ‘whores’. A woman who craves physical attention from her husband is in this paradigm intrinsically impure.

Chana discusses her experience of separation from her husband and how much she needed touch during difficult and important times in her life. Chana suffered a miscarriage and struggled without the physical support of her husband during that difficult time. Chana talks us through her experience of having to keep the rules through such difficult times:

“Um only . . . only . . . there’s only been one time that it’s genuinely made me feel very sad which is when I had a miscarriage and like you can’t touch really at all um for ages and ages and ages like three months sometimes because every time you do like continue to bleed which can happen for a really long time um you start again.” (Chana, 228 – 232)

The miscarriage was evidently traumatic for Chana, who says that it was the one time in her life when it was overwhelmingly difficult to keep the rules. Miscarriage signifies a loss of life, motherhood and identity, and even though there were many other times she couldn’t touch her husband, she felt that on this occasion she simply couldn’t cope without her husband’s comforting touch:

“I did feel a sense of tension during that time where there should have been nothing but like love and just niceness that . . . during that kind of time and that’s the only time where I was very question . . . I questioned a lot about the laws at that point” (Chana 244-247)

At the time of the miscarriage Chana desperately wanted to feel cared for, but the laws left her feeling even more stressed and tense during this stressful time, rather than comforted by her husband. Chana felt nervous and anxious at a time of her greatest emotional need and therefore was unable to relax, recover and heal. This experience drove her to challenge the validity of the laws. She attributed her husband’s disappointing behaviour to the laws rather than to insensitivity:

“the feeling of knowing that you cannot touch your husband, there’s nothing you can do about it. I find that challenging like there’s, you know, there’s no loophole, there’s no way out, it doesn’t matter what’s happening um it’s . . . that is a challenge in itself” (Chana, 253-256)

Chana’s expression, ‘loophole’ encapsulates her feeling of entrapment; a loophole is an escape route, but she can find no solution to her predicament. A miscarriage is a tragedy for which there is no

'loophole' of hope, yet another life event over which Chana feels powerless. In a way Chana is expressing she would have thought that for this awful circumstance there should be an exception for her to be able to gain comfort through touching her husband but there is not, and it is this in itself that is very trapping for her. Chana's tone is in one of disbelief and affirmation and while saying this she had a strong look of affirmation and shock on her face which can perhaps express to us that she finds it shocking that there is no exception even while she was feeling so bad.

Emma also talks about her experience of not being able to touch:

"I wanted like a lot of care and love physically during the time when we weren't supposed to be touching he would be more . . . more distant and then I would feel rejected and feel sad"
(Emma, 189-191)

During the time of physical distance Emma feels a dissonance between herself and her husband caused by their different responses to the laws. Emma implies that a lack of communication makes her husband's well-intentioned attempts at communication counterproductive. Even if his distancing himself from her is meant to help her, she still feels rejected, yet finds it difficult to communicate this. Chana, although as mentioned above found the distance at times really difficult, acknowledges that aspects of the rules do bring her pleasure and a feeling of closeness to her husband:

"when you are really busy so the fact sometimes you are forced to actually . . . I have started to now be like that's actually a good thing" (Chana, 613-614)

Chana may be signalling a change of feeling about compulsory sexual relations; scheduled sex means that it is not crowded out of her busy life. Although the word 'forced' generally has negative connotations, Chana uses it here in an interestingly positive way to show that the rules ensure that her sex life doesn't suffer.

In summary, this subordinate theme examines participants' feelings about experiencing closeness and distance from their husbands at different times. They explain how they cope with the feeling of rejection through being physically distanced, but also how working on the difficulties together actually strengthened the relationship in a way that wouldn't be possible unless they observed the rules. Participants also explore how it feels to have different experiences from those of their husbands during the times when touching is forbidden and how they cope with that. Participants also express how it feels to desire something prohibited that they feel and believe is both right and natural. All participants felt some kind of distance from their husbands but experienced it in different, unique ways, some finding it really painful after first-time sexual relations, and others after traumatic miscarriages. Lastly, this theme also describes how participants felt about enforced physical contact

with their husband and how although being forbidden to touch causes alienation, it can also bring closeness and empowerment.

3.5.2 Subordinate theme b) Intrusion v. space

The enforced distance between husband and wife stimulated both women's desire for attention and sense of power through having personal space. They experienced both power and containment during periods of separation. Referring to a previous marriage, Maya said:

“when we weren't allowed to touch I actually felt a lot more safe um because I wasn't being rejected um during that time” (Maya, 144-145)

Maya found solace in compulsory isolation, which prevented her from being rejected by her husband. Maya may have felt more empowered or at least protected during these times of forbidden contact. She mentions that during the time when touching was permitted she suffered from feeling unaccepted and abandoned by her husband.

Natalie also found peace when she was prohibited from touching her husband:

“that's the time when you can have that break, when you can relax, when I can say “actually I don't want it right now” (Natalie, 375-377)

Natalie describes the break from touching her husband as an opportunity to enjoy her own personal space and the power to say what she really feels, a power she thinks she might not otherwise experience if she had not observed the rules. Natalie's emphatic word 'actually' expresses not only the confidence she feels to express her own opinions; it conveys an assertiveness that registers her sense of fearlessness about the consequences of her self-assertion. This time of empowerment is important for Natalie, who feels disempowered by the rules at other times, such as when she had to send her underwear to the Rabbi:

“I sent it off to the Rabbi um or my husband did in an envelope and then you . . . you know, they . . . they give you an answer, say yes or no. It's really awkward, it's . . . it's sort of kind of coming into your private lives I suppose in a way” (Natalie 205-208).

Natalie talks about the envelope as a place of concealment, suggesting perhaps her desire to cover up the shameful fact that her personal privacy is under the control and judgment of men: her husband and the Rabbi. Natalie sounds powerless and vulnerable - she has no say in the process or in a decision about something so private to her, and perhaps resents the Rabbi's intrusion.

Juliette also has paradoxical feelings about different aspects of the rules, which she copes with it in different ways:

“sometimes it’s nice to have a bit of personal space and to know you’re not going to get like hot and sweaty. Um our bed sheets are clean, it’s just quite relaxed sometime” (Juliette, 217-219)

Juliette expresses relief at the break from the physical effort of sexual relations with her husband and enjoys the respite from feelings of being uncomfortable or threatened by obligatory, unwanted sex. Her contrast between ‘hot and sweaty’ sexual relations and ‘clean bed sheets’ suggests that she finds intercourse unpleasantly unclean and distasteful, though whether this is a personal reflection on her husband’s lovemaking or on the principle of sexual intercourse per se is not clear. Juliette later explains the importance of her personal space:

“never have done this but that whole like if you’re not sure sending it to someone to get that validated or checked like that’s weird and super invasive to me” (Juliette 576-578).

Juliette’s coded message is that without daring to express outright hostility to the idea of a Rabbi inspecting her underwear, she considers it a theologically sanctioned form of sexual harassment; the Rabbi’s prurient role in the checking process strikes her as creepy and abnormal. This sense of feminist outrage is hinted at in Juliette’s vocabulary: ‘weird’ and ‘super invasive’. For a woman in the twenty-first century to have subject her knickers to the gaze of a man seems to her a gross violation of the privacy and even the human rights of a woman.

Sarah appreciates the space she feels the laws provide:

“I can’t help but say I find it quite relieving. Um I just . . . I . . . I see it as a natural break um which, yeah, I think I just . . . I really appreciate actually” (Sarah, 166-168).

Sarah’s lexis, ‘relief’ betrays an unspoken admission that she finds sexual relations sometimes tedious or perhaps even downright unpleasant. The laws seem to offer her a religiously sanctioned welcome respite from the tedium of obligatory sexual relations. Sarah’s comment that the period of abstinence is ‘natural’ hints at an expectation that other women will share her view that sex is not necessarily a joy, and even, possibly, that woman is entitled to say ‘no’, although interestingly, none of these women mentions ever refusing their husbands sex on demand. Sarah is really grateful that the laws gives her the space for this ‘natural break’ and I wonder whether, without it, she would consider herself free to say ‘no’.

Emma finds the rules disappointing; they may be designed to protect her personal space, but instead, they leave her with strong feelings of intrusion:

“feeling of complete and utter intrusion into my personal space. I found that more intrusive than . . . you know, it’s ironic actually because these laws are made . . . are there to protect your . . . you feeling intruded upon and actually I feel far more intruded upon” (Emma, 358-361).

Emma’s strong words and angry tone forcibly conveyed to me her sense of violation, as if she were the victim of physical or sexual assault by a close relative whom she had had every reason to trust. Emma expected and trusted the rules to protect her, and feels utterly betrayed, which leads her question their authenticity and authority. While Sarah was saying these words she had a look of anger and disgust on her face enhancing to me her strong feelings of betrayal.

Chana feels similar disappointment and betrayal:

“everyone talks about it being so personal, so personal and yet everyone else gets their business involved and that’s what bothers me a lot about it.” (Chana, 298-299)

Chana expresses bewilderment that the laws and religion she trusted to guide and protect her have so cruelly betrayed her. She feels troubled that her personal life and marriage are intruded on by outsiders, who have robbed her of all privacy. Chana experiences the claim by religious authorities to have the right to pry into the most intimate details of her private sex life a form of persecution. Her tone conveyed her strong anger.

Layla’s experience of Rabbinical intrusion is similar:

“blood spotting isn’t really like sexually exciting for someone but for me it was just kind of like I don’t really want him having my underwear” (Layla 301-303).

Layla is perhaps speculating on the Rabbi’s intentions and desires when he is checking her knickers. However pure these intentions may be, she finds the gaze of another man into her personal life unbearably embarrassing, intrusive and disempowering. Yet her compliance with the demand to surrender her underwear also shows how deeply she has internalized the patriarchal authority of the Rabbi, no doubt the product of a lifetime of education and social conditioning.

In summary participant’s express ambivalent feelings about keeping the rules of family purity, veering between the extremes of empowerment and powerlessness.

In this second superordinate theme, I have explored Orthodox Jewish women's experience of relational space in terms of feeling both distant from and close to their husbands, power over their space and powerlessness when that space is invaded. The experience of closeness was as highly prized as the converse feeling of rejection was to their husbands was painful. Most valued the opportunity and experience of a calm period in which to unwind.

3.6 Superordinate theme 4: Desire for Meaningful Attachment

The final superordinate theme highlights the women's experience of desiring meaningful relationships through the act of observing the laws. The superordinate theme comprises three subordinate themes, the first of which explores participant's hope that their marriage will be strong and secure. This is discussed in subordinate theme '**hope**'. The second subordinate theme '**purity**' describes the experience of self-purification as a means to attach and reconnect to their husbands. The third subordinate theme explores participants desire for a close attachment to G-d. This is discussed in the subordinate theme '**spirituality**'.

3.6.1 Subordinate Theme a) Hope

This theme considers how the women experience hope that the rules will ensure a good marriage. Natalie, who previously spoke about her difficult experience, explains:

"I think for me the advantage and the goodness and the positive um over-rides that negativity and . . . and outweighs the negativity so I think that it's a beautiful concept and I think it's an important concept and I think it's very good for our marriage, um our relationship, the growing of our relationship" (Natalia, 511-515)

Natalie expresses faith in the rules without attempting to analyse the exact causal process by which the rules strengthen a marriage. I formed the impression at this point that Natalie was expressing a yearning that all the difficulties she had endured would be rewarded by her dream of a stronger relationship with her husband. The word 'growing' reveals Natalie's understanding that a relationship is not static; it develops like a journey and must be worked on. This perhaps explains her faith in the rules as a tool for strengthening her marriage.

Juliette shares this faith:

Um we both hope and think that it will increase the longevity of our physical sexual relationship and I'm pleased about that in advance of it being a problem um so, yeah, I really feel very positively about the whole thing (Juliette, 79-82)

Juliette too assumes that without the rules she would find it harder to sustain a good marriage, though, like Natalie, she gives no valid reason why other ways and means could not secure a good marriage. Juliette's inclusive pronoun 'we' gives a clue; by mutually agreeing to be bound by the rules, she shares an especially close bond with her husband.

Maya has similar faith in the binding power of the rules:

"I had like a lot of hope and, you know, I . . . when I was sitting there I would um pray a lot before and like hope that everything was going to be OK." (Maya, 27-29)

The repeated word hope may signify the intensity of Maya's dream that when she came home things would be better in her marriage. But it could also be a token of desperation; hoping that everything will be ok is a tacit admission that right now everything is not ok. Maya comments that in her difficult times, she used the Mikvah as a place to become closer to G-d, another sign that she is trusting G-d rather than in communion with her husband to patch up her marriage. Maya continued:

"when I'd come back and, you know, my husband knew that I had gone and he would just ignore me and, you know, not want to sleep with me and I felt really, really rejected and I felt really alone [. . .] it was a really painful experience um especially towards the end" (Maya, 29-32, 41).

The temporary hope inspired by the religious experience at the Mikvah is instantly and cruelly crushed when Maya returns home, only to be coldly rejected; following the rules isn't a magic cure for her loneliness and experience of alienation. When Maya said it got 'really painful' towards the end I felt her pain as acute as an actual physical blow to an open wound. Longing for recognition, Maya experiences only cruel neglect.

This theme explores participants' hope for a good, secure relationship with their husbands. Some already see the benefits of the rules in strengthening the marriage; others retain faith in the rules as a sort of 'safety net' to preserve the sizzling excitement of their physical relationship. Lastly, Maya hopes in vain that the rules will strengthen the bond with her husband.

3.6.2 Subordinate Theme b) Purity

This subordinate theme explores women's experiences of purifying themselves in order to reconnect with their husbands. The term 'purity' was always used in relation to their experience in going to the Mikvah, the ritual bath in which they must immerse themselves fully before they are allowed to touch their husbands again. Sarah compared this ritual purification to standing under the Chuppah, the bridal canopy.

“I don’t mind mikveh because I find it . . . it is a bit of the symbol between pure and impure . . . impure and pure and it’s not that I feel inside that I’m impure but I do like to feel pure. It’s a bit like getting married and I do feel that way like it’s like standing under the Chuppah, it’s like you do feel like you’re doing something to actively purify yourself” (Sarah, 338-342)

Sarah clearly values the purifying function of the Mikvah ritual, in both the physical and spiritual sense. Without necessarily feeling literally unclean, Sarah means, I think, that the experience renders her as pure as an angel. She compares to her sensation of purity under the Chuppa, in her white wedding dress. The word ‘actively’ shows Sarah’s positive feeling that she has agency in her own purification; she is doing it voluntarily and on her own terms. The reference to the Chuppah and the marriage ceremony also points to Sarah’s awareness that this marks the last moment of individual life before embarking on a joint life together as a strong, happy couple. The analogy shows Sarah thinking of the Mikvah as her last moment of being alone before reconnecting with her husband, just as the Chuppa marks her transition from single to married life.

Chana describes the act of purifying herself as therapeutic:

“now I feel calm, I feel happy that I know I’m going there, doing my thing and it’s actually quite . . . now I actually find it quite therapeutic and cleansing and like even now I’m so calm about it” (Chana, 534-537)

Chana personalizes the experience, taking a universal law and making it her own. The reference to therapy reveals her understanding that there is a healing purpose to the law; it is no mere formality. Chana’s tone and bodily expression show that speaking of the Mikvah experience suddenly relaxes her and makes her feel peaceful and at ease. It could be that the therapeutic value of the Mikvah experience lies in its function as a necessary step towards a joyful reunion with her husband.

3.6.3 Subordinate theme c) Spirituality

This theme examines how the women felt that keeping the rules enhanced their spirituality and fulfils their desire to be to G-d and their religion. Emma expresses her spirituality through a contrast between humans and animals:

“animals don’t go do they, they don’t . . . they don’t have that separation between physical and spiritual and I guess it’s quite nice and comforting to know that during that time like as the woman of my home I’ve brought some type of spirituality, a spiritual focus into it which is nice” (Emma, 458-461)

Emma identifies the rules as a spiritual choice available to her as a human being with the moral awareness that an animal lacks. This for Emma seems to justify the abstinence demanded by the rules, as a means of strengthening her ties to G-d and to her husband, and which radiates throughout her home and life. Emma, who evidently values her closeness too G-d very highly, seems to feel it her personal responsibility to bring this spirituality into her home and that she could not do this without the support of the rules.

Layla also feels the rules enhance her spirituality and bring her closer to G-d:

“It makes me feel a bit more spiritual. It’s the one . . . it’s, I mean apart from . . . like it’s the one thing that I do for myself in a spiritual way”. (Layla, 435-436)

Layla values the rules partly because they offer her the sole means of exercising free choice in what she sees as a noble endeavour to purify herself, her marriage and her home. Her emphatic reflexive pronoun ‘myself’ explains how much she prizes this opportunity to shape her life as she wishes, finding freedom in obedience and rewarded by closeness to G-d. Layla’s repetition of it being the ‘one thing’ shows that she prioritizes the rules over all other considerations.

This theme summarises participants’ desire to feel closer to Gd and bring uplifting spirituality into their lives through keeping the rules of family purity.

This final superordinate theme gives an overview of the importance participants place on their attachment to their husbands and to G-d. They participants describe their experiences of keeping the rules and the reasons why this is so important to them. Their yearning for a good marital relationship is so strong that they are prepared to endure all the struggles entailed in observing the rules in order to reap the benefits. They also express hopes and dreams of ensuring good, strong marriages through observing the rules, and describe how the active pursuit of purity is their means of creating and securing a strong relationship with their husbands. Their experience of the Mikvah is filled with calm and serenity as they are engaging in a ritual that will reconnect them with their husbands. Lastly, the theme describes participants’ experience of greater closeness to G-d facilitated by obedience to the rules.

Chapter 4 - Discussion

4.1 Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study is to shed light on the lived experience of women observing Jewish family purity laws within the first five years of their marriage, and to understand the meanings they attribute to this experience from their own personal perspectives. This has been achieved through a phenomenological approach and by applying IPA's double hermeneutic process (Smith, 1996). The study has elicited a profound understanding of participants' experiences and portrays a network of differing voices as these women express and reflect on their personal experiences.

In this chapter I examine the key findings and conclusions that have emerged from the analysis of my interviews with my participants. I have done this by categorising common and recurring patterns and themes that emerged within the four larger superordinate themes, namely **“the power of dissonance”**, **“the emotional juxtaposition”**, **“the phenomenon of relational space”** and **“desire for attachment”**. I have grouped the key findings within these four superordinate themes. Using the research literature most relevant to the key findings, I discuss how the findings of this study support or differ from those of previous studies. I then set out the limitations of this study, and review its clinical implications for the field of Counselling Psychology, expressing my own views on how this topic can be further explored and developed. My discussion concludes with an extended reflection on how my own experiences impacted this study, and vice versa.

4.2 Super-Ordinate Theme 1: The Power of Dissonance

This first super-ordinate theme, The Power of Dissonance, covers several different findings in relation to participants' subjective and dissonant experience of observation of family purity laws. Participants expressed ambivalence and dissonance, caught between their own desires, their husbands' desires, and the rules. These tensions may have been intra-psychic or cognitive, but might equally have resulted from participants' sense that challenging the religious system by which they lived was unacceptable, particularly to a researcher who was obviously an observant Jew. This might imply that the women were filled with anxiety and pressure to conform to practices in which they were reluctant to engage. Along with cognitive dissonance, conflicting anxiety and pressure, the women's accounts also displayed strong feelings of guilt. The cognitive dissonance sprang from feelings of guilt: these women 'felt' the rules were sacred, and wished to please their husbands – but they also 'felt' that the rules were unreasonable, and felt resentful. Holding these conflicting beliefs simultaneously must surely place enormous pressure on them. Finally, they expressed guilt for creating the initial problem

through menstruating, while at some level they were simultaneously aware that this was hardly their fault – a further dimension of their cognitive dissonance. Perhaps a psychodynamic reading of this tension would be that participants were struggling in vain to reach equilibrium: their unconscious id, incorporating the primal libido with its sexual urges, was in conflict with the overwhelming religious and behavioural demands of their superego, with the result that their ego (conscious identity) was torn between the two. The resulting disequilibrium reported by participants inevitably led to anxiety.

The present study, in line with previous findings, shows that women in heterosexual relationships experience sexual pressures of various kinds. For example, in one quantitative study, approximately 37% of women reported having experienced sexual compliance (Katz & Tirone, 2009), 49.1% of women had experienced verbal persuasion, and 61.4% reported persistence (Livingston, Buddie, Testa, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2004). In another study, 48% of women reported that they had experienced coercive sex (Jozkowski & Sanders, 2012). The concept of sexual pressure includes a range of unwanted sexual experiences. Recent scholarship terms sexual pressure as “adherence to gender stereotypical expectations about engaging in sex and concern about the adverse consequences ranging from losing the relationship to coercive force or threats by a male partner if these expectations are not met” (Jones & Gulick, 2009, p. 72). In the present study, sexual pressure appears to emanate from a specific source, the Jewish family purity rules. The women explain that because these rules impose a period when sexual relations are prohibited, they feel pressurised to engage in sexual relations with their husbands during the ‘permitted’ times, ‘the time for sexual relations’. Such sexual pressure can be subtle and internalised (Goetz & Shackelford, 2009; O’Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998); at other times it can incorporate explicit forms of verbal pressure, such as through intimidation, physical force or psychoactive substances (Gladden, Sisco, & Figueredo, 2008). These findings, together with those of the current study, are interesting, as the rules are designed to respect women, yet serve to control and govern their desires and sexual relationships with their husbands. As Delaney (1988) comments, the rule is “a fecund symbol for both condensing and expressing a complex set of notions about women, life, and the world”, an observation manifestly confirmed by the findings of this study. The women are made to feel utterly powerless: not only are they denied physical contact, but they have no autonomy over their dress code, sleeping arrangements and many other aspects of their daily lives.

Previous literature is in alignment with this study; it has found the outcome of sexual pressure to be disheartening, resulting in adverse emotional consequences such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, stress, fear and poor social adjustment (Larimer, Lydum, Anderson, & Turner, 1999; Siegel, Golding, Stein, Burnam, & Sorenson, 1990; Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997). The physical consequences can include lowered sexual functioning (de Visser, Rissel, Richters, & Smith, 2007; Katz & Myhr, 2008), eating disorders and substance abuse (Golding, 1994). The severe physical and psychological consequences of enforced adherence to family purity laws is therefore a matter of

concern; the present study suggests that such women feel overwhelmingly pressurised to consent to sexual relations with their husbands, articulating this sense of a lack of freedom to choose whether to engage in sexual relations through revealing diction such as the word ‘forced’. This lexical choice expresses powerful resentment at being obliged to perform regardless of the participant’s feelings, and implies a degree of honesty and openness, since it may have been difficult to share such painful thoughts with a researcher. Another participant spoke in similar terms of sexual pressures filling her with anxiety and rendering her powerless to manage her own sexual life.

Participants spoke of their powerlessness, anger and frustration at being coerced by cultural ‘expectation’ into having sexual relations without regard for their own needs and desires. This seems to have produced a causal link whereby the women appear to attribute their distress to the pressure imposed by the authority of the rules. Such internal pressure, what the poet William Blake (1792) called “mind-forged manacles”, can be regarded as inducing self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Such self-generated pressure may be the consequence of women judging themselves by the norms of a patriarchal culture, and because physical attraction is crucial in many relationships; particularly in the early years of marriage, women may judge their self-worth according to male-created aesthetic criteria, thereby internalizing the ‘male gaze’. This is all the more powerful because it is also a feminine norm to invest in a romantic relationship in which the attraction of looks is strong (Mahalik, Morray, Coonerty-Femiano, Ludlow, Slattery, & Smiler, 2005). Women are taught that they need to cultivate their appearance in order to be attractive to men, and that they should take pleasure in doing so and in being identified as objects (Bartky, 2003). Due to the strong emphasis on attractiveness in romantic relationships, some theorists have proposed that within marriage, objectification is safe and perhaps enjoyable (Nussbaum, 1999). Although some research has shown women reporting this sexualisation in positive terms, other research has found that it exacerbates the negative consequences of self-objectification (Liss, Erchull, & Ramsey, 2011). Self-objectification has been linked to a wide range of negative consequences (Moradi & Huang, 2008) including lowered self-esteem ((Hurt et al., 2007; Tolman, Impett, Tracy, & Michael, 2006), depressive symptomology (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Hurt et al., 2007; Szymanski & Henning, 2007; Tiggemann & Williams, 2012; Tolman et al., 2006), and sexual dysfunction (Steer & Tiggemann, 2008; Tiggemann & Williams, 2012).

A woman who self-objectifies may focus on her body as physical object desirable to men and consequently focus less on her own wants and needs. Research has found a link between objectification and constraints on the freedom to make one’s own decisions (Gray, Knobe, Sheskin, Bloom, & Barrett, 2011). The term ‘object’ incorporates lack of agency, so those who view themselves as objects are understandably unable to exercise free choice. A correlation has been found

between low sexual agency and inability to reject unwanted sex (Curtin, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2011; Rostovsky, Dekhtyar, Cupp, & Anderman, 2008).

This study supports previous findings about women who feel pressurised into having sex with their husbands. The precise source of this pressure is uncertain, although some of the women did attribute personal pressure directly to the rules. They expressed the view that such sexual pressures caused them stress and anxiety; within this theme there emerged issues of powerlessness and entrapment, robbed of any agency over their own desires. As with the above studies, it could be that sexual pressure causes this disempowering self-objectification, a phenomenon not of course confined to the Orthodox Jewish community. However, it should also be considered that at least some participants may have found 'the rules' a convenient scapegoat for more fundamental dissatisfaction they were experiencing in their marriages – perhaps it is far easier to blame rules that can be broken than a husband who cannot so easily be set aside. It would be interesting to pursue this research further to explore the interaction of factors which could include Rabbinic authority and/or fear of their husbands' anger or perhaps anything else, in shaping women's experience of observance of the laws. This has potentially wider implications for counselling women with issues relating to their own agency and self-objectification.

The women expressed guilt not only because of their bleeding – the source of the restriction on touch - but also because their desires differed from those of their husbands. They often expressed the idea that this guilt feeling produced negative cognition in the form of judgment and self-blame. They explain this as the consequence of accepting the rules as a necessary evil rather than as a life-enhancing spiritual system by which they themselves wanted to live. The present participants appeared to confirm the findings and conclusions of Douglass (1966): they felt their culture objectified their bodies and that menstruation rendered them inferior to men, causing them to feel guilt on this account. Hyman (1976) and Plaskow (1990) agree that this is exactly what makes Jewish Orthodox women feel second-class citizens. The participants in the present study concur: menstruation makes them feel dirty and humiliated to the extent that they feel guilty about even tell their husbands that they are menstruating. Turgel (2012) also found that women experienced guilt but unlike in this study, the guilt related to their motivation for keeping the rules, which centred on fear of the consequences of any infraction for themselves and their families. The women in the present study expressed guilt about observance in many ways, as did Turgel's (2012) cohort. However, while Turgel (2012) found this guilt to be grounded in superstitious fears and beliefs, one of the reasons my own participants gave for their guilt was that their desires did not match those of their husbands. One source of guilt appeared to be the belief that a husband was more committed to the rules than the wife, implying that her religious commitment was somehow inferior or weaker. This reiterates the idea that women feel inferior to men, perhaps simply because their vision of observance of the rules differs

from that of men. As Steinberg (1997) comments, because the laws are inscribed in the Torah, which orthodox Jews accept as unchangeable, women feel obliged to adhere to them, regardless of their comprehension or experience of these laws. This causes them to believe that their own feelings and experiences are neither validated nor accepted, further entrenching their feelings of inferiority to men and to the laws. Labinsky et al. (2009) suggest that the women in their study experienced emotional disturbance due to their observance, although they offer no interpretation of these problems. Paradoxically, and without attempting to reconcile the contradiction, Labinsky et al. (2009) also found that those who kept family purity rules had higher emotional satisfaction than those who didn't. The present study does not explore this contradiction, but brings to light the tensions and emotional conflict involved in keeping the laws.

4.3 Super-Ordinate Theme 2: The Emotional Juxtaposition

The emotional juxtaposition super-ordinate theme explores participants' accounts of contradictory experiences of feeling utterly bored by routine, alongside accounts expressing frustration that their sexual desires are regulated by the law, rather than by their own personal preferences. Participants expressed feelings of being controlled by the law; this perhaps answers part of our question above, suggesting strongly that they deeply resent the law that pressurizes them to have sexual relations with their husbands. These accounts of resentful, difficult feelings of pressure and reduction by the rules to objectified robot status seemed in stark contrast to their other, more positive expressions of the feeling that the laws add excitement to the marriage. These women did express the belief that the rules add to the excitement of their marriage; the reuniting of touch, they said, is so special that it is worth all the difficult moments when they are forbidden to touch. This contradiction, which may in fact be a paradox capable of reconciliation, should be treated with caution; the women might have been unwilling to present too bleak a picture of their married lives, either to themselves or to the researcher – the influence of the desirability effect may have operated here to lead them to speak more enthusiastically of their sexual lives than they actually felt. Alternatively, they may have been unwilling to acknowledge to the researcher the full extent of their marital dissatisfaction. One of the problems of this form of research is that it seeks to explore how people make sense of their experiences in the context in which the data is gathered, but the researcher has nothing to go on except self-reports, which may not accurately reflect those experiences due to the artificiality of the context. Adler (1992) was convinced that designing new theories or interpretations around the rules for women wouldn't necessarily change their lived experiences; women's self-enforced acceptance of these oppressive rules, and belief that their self-imposed suffering was good for them, was merely evidence of successful brainwashing. Adler, like many women in the present, study rejected the idea that the rules gave women 'rights' which renewed their honeymoon experience after a period of enforced abstinence. Gross (1996) argues that women should be empowered to take ownership of their own

values and religious desires, rather than feel forced to keep them simply because they are encoded in a written law.

Ribner (2003) and Turgel's (2012) findings are in line with those of this study; both report women expressing a sense of difficulty during the transition from the period of separation to that of intimacy with their husbands. Ribner suggests that having to proceed directly from not touching to mandatory sexual intercourse is jarring; in some ways it requires an on/off button, which some couples do not feel comfortable with and which ignores a woman's natural need for gradual arousal. This aligns with the 'robotic' theme; participants expressed feeling like robots, required to supply sexual intercourse at fixed times. Ribner (2003) proposes that this abrupt shift from being permitted to being denied sexual relations creates an identity conflict for Modern Orthodox married couples; growing up, they are taught that premarital sex is bad, but that within marriage it is not only allowed but is praiseworthy. They are then taught something rather different: that sexual relations are wrong when one is niddah (menstruating) and good when one is not. This could perhaps explain why the women in the present study reported a disempowering lack of thrill and stimulation within their sexual relationship; it is impossible to manufacture rapture on demand. In short, the theme that appears for some is that sexual relations under the strict authority of these rules becomes something of a matter of business rather than pleasure. The women's difficult feelings about regulating their sexual intimacy with their husbands' appears to align with Paula Hyman's (1976) argument regarding family purity laws: "It is precisely in this area [of sexual regulation] that the second-class status of women within Judaism is highlighted." Judith Plaskow (1990, 184-85) agrees: a review of Jewish religious sources on the subject - or rather, the subjection - of women makes it "difficult to conclude anything other than that women are a source of moral danger and an incitement to depravity and lust." Jewish feminists argue that these laws oppress and humiliate women by placing on them the burden of self-regulation due to their negative impact on men. (Baum, Hyman and Michel, 1976; Biale, 1984; Priesand 1975; Swidler, 1976). Adler (1991) believes that a feminist Judaism in which women's experiences and troubles are taken seriously is not possible unless Judaism takes women's experiences seriously into account. Adler adds that women's sexuality is part of an accepted practice rather than an aberration that must be regulated, and that women's variable sexual orientation and experience should be respected within mainstream religious culture; women's voices must be heard. Similarly, Ross (2004) argues that it should be acceptable for religious law to be re-interpreted in a way that reflects contemporary culture and values. Religious laws should be capable of re-interpretation in light of women's experiences, enabling them to remain within acceptable religious boundaries, as Plaskow states, without sacrificing either their religious faith or emotional well-being.

The women in the present study expressed feelings of tedium about reconnecting to their husbands in order to have sexual relations at the same time every month, a routine they described as detracting

from the spontaneity and joy of sex. Labinsky et al. (2009) similarly suggest that their participants have difficulty returning to intimacy after periods of separation, although they do not explain or speculate why women experience this difficulty. Like some women in the present study, Adler's (1992) cohort normalizes menstruation cognitively as a symbolic process of death and rebirth, in which sexual abstinence is a form of death preceding rebirth, rather than a subjective feeling that the rules recreate a honeymoon-like experience. Turgel (2012), by contrast, sees this difficulty of renewal as resulting from the women's experiences at the Mikvah - she believes it is the shame of exposure felt during the Mivkah ceremony that causes women to find renewed intimacy with their husbands difficult. This view places the blame for women's difficulty in reconnecting with their husbands squarely on the Mikvah, though the causal connection is surely weak; Turgel may be confusing correlation for causation. It is possible that, as suggested above, the women are attributing their dissatisfaction with their marriages to the rules, when the dissatisfaction may have quite different causes.

As mentioned above, the women paradoxically also express a completely different view, namely, that observing the rules results in a special excitement as they move from growing anticipation during the period of not touching to the thrilling climax of being able to touch again. Participants' accounts mentioned that the self-imposed distance between themselves and their husbands is what created the feelings of passion and excitement, a yearning to be with their husbands. These contradictory feelings are perhaps hard to reconcile, and raise the possibility of the desirability effect, though a simple explanation is that there is no gain without pain; we value most what we have struggled most to achieve. Turgel's (2012) participants, by contrast, unanimously expressed uncomplicated longing for their husbands during the time of separation. This longing culminated in a positive experience of passionate renewal. However, it was not clear whether these participants were engaging in the practice of 'fasting-and-feasting' voluntarily, or whether they felt coerced into obeying the rules; they may not have been acting by personal choice. Turgel's (2012) participants were unanimous on the topic of the positive, stimulating effects of reunion, whereas some participants in the present study found reunion with their husbands both difficult and monotonous, while others found it romantic and exciting. The difference between the findings of the two studies could be due to the fact that this study addressed participants' experiences within the first five years of marriage, whereas Turgel (2012) focused on participants who had been married for a period ranging between 1-18 years. This perhaps suggests that some women who have been married for a shorter length of time find reuniting with their husbands difficult; they may expect more excitement from their sexual relationships than women who have been married longer, and whose marriages have developed beyond the initial sexual excitement to a more 'friendship'-style relationship. Marmon (1999) supports the finding of this study that women enjoy reuniting with their husbands. Out of Marmon's 46 participants, over 50% spoke of a sense of rejuvenation in their physical relationships with their husbands following a period of

separation. Similarly, three quarters of the sample in a study by Labinsky et al (2009) believed that observing family purity laws improved their sexual lives. It should also be borne in mind that many other variables, particularly of temperament and upbringing, must play a part in these varied responses to an identical experience.

Labinsky et al. (2009) propose a direct link between physical separation from one's husband and enhanced sexual frequency, strengthening and extending the excitement of newlywed life. Labinsky believes sexual relations are enhanced by this excitement and period of separation. Thirty-five percent of Labinsky et al.'s (2009) participants who observe family purity laws had sexual intercourse between three and six times a week, whereas Lauman et al. (1999) found that only 17% of couples had sexual relations this frequently, though all self-reports of this kind should always be treated with caution. Labinsky et al. (2009) suggests that this finding is explained by the fact that those who observe family purity laws are allowed sexual relations for only two weeks of the month and their sexual intimacy is therefore very concentrated. The participants in the present study clearly expressed not only frustration at separation, but also deeper excitement to be with their spouses because intimacy is followed by a period of separation. This could perhaps explain why Labinsky et al. (2009) found increased sexual activity in observant couples compared to the general, non-observant population, whose lives are not structured by similar periods of separation and reunion. However, these conclusions can appear overgeneralized; the 'general, non-observant' population of the United Kingdom amounts to something like sixty million people, whose sexual lives can hardly be homogenous. The present study's findings, with some participants speaking of renewal with their husbands as boring and monotonous, perhaps reducing their sex drive, and others finding it exciting, implies that other factors than simply religious regulations are responsible for the varied frequency and responses to renewed sexual relations after a period of abstinence. We do not know the exact reason for sexual frequency, although the findings of this study and those of Labinsky et al. (2009) suggest that sexual frequency may be enhanced for some, but not all, observant participants. Nevertheless, all these studies create an interesting area for further research into whether sexual separation leads to increased sexual frequency, and if so, whether increased sexual satisfaction necessarily leads to happier people and marriages.

In light of the results of the present study, it would be interesting to explore whether women's sexual satisfaction, which some participants reported to be highly exciting and satisfying, and others to be boring and monotonous, actually impacts on their wider marital satisfaction. Are sexual satisfaction and marital happiness correlated, and if so, what lessons can we learn? Studies have found that women experience a closer association between sexual and marital satisfaction than do men (Birnbaum, Reis, Mikulincer, Gillath, & Orpaz, 2006; Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994; Gadassi et al., 2016; Guo & Huang, 2005). Birnbaum et al. (2006) believe that the reason for this stronger

equation is that women perceive sex in more emotional terms as only one dimension of a close, interpersonal relationship while men perceive it more narrowly as simply fulfilling their physical needs. Women perhaps may see sexual satisfaction as a crucial aspect to their relationship, raising the question of what impact this could have on this study's findings that Orthodox women feel the rules make their sexual lives boring and monotonous. Although diminished sexual satisfaction could have damaging effects on the marital relationship as a whole, it is possible that their overriding religious ideology may weaken the association between sexual and marital satisfaction. Hyun and Joseph (2010) found that the more religious the individual, the weaker the association between marital and sexual satisfaction. They theorized that this is because a religious person's conservative attitude to sex may impact the way they view the relationship. It is certainly possible that a religious person, male or female, prioritizes the spiritual over the physical, and consequently attributes less importance to an unsatisfactory sex life. Similarly, Lazar (2017) found the association between sexual and marital satisfaction to be weaker the more religious the individual. Lazar (2010) also found that the correlation increases over time: the shorter the period of marriage, the stronger the association between marital and sexual satisfaction, while the association reduced the longer one was married. It is important to note, however, that this finding is based on self-reports and could therefore reflect a desirability effect or other unconscious cognitive bias. Additionally, it was conducted on the a priori hypothesis that presumed the existence of an association between marital and sexual satisfaction. Participants may thus have been prompted by leading questions to offer what they imagined to be the desired answers; the way a question is framed can significantly influence the answer. Nevertheless, Lazar's study gives grounds for asking whether women such as those in the present study do genuinely relate reduced sexual satisfaction to a wider dissatisfaction with their marriage. Other data suggests a strong correlation between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction and general well-being (Proulx, Helms & Buchler, 2007). A longitudinal sample showed that marital conflict could lead to depressive symptoms (Choi & Marks, 2008). One must however, be careful to distinguish between cause and effect; it is possible that the depression, at least in some cases, causes, rather than results in, marital discord. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that Orthodox Jewish women who are having difficulty in their sexual relations may experience reduced marital satisfaction and impaired mental health. It is equally important to consider how these factors drive each other in what might be some kind of destructive vicious circle.

Another important factor is the report by some women that the sudden, disturbing shift from not touching at all to immediate sexual relations with their husbands induces robotic feelings. Muise et al. (2014) found that the amount of time spent on foreplay does impact sexual satisfaction. However, the meaning of foreplay is rarely considered within research, although it is widely held to constitute the gradual arousal of a woman by a man, and if this definition is accepted, it would not preclude foreplay even in the situation framed by the purity laws. It is therefore uncertain whether frustration at renewed

sexual relations is the product of two weeks' enforced celibacy, or lack of foreplay when sexual relations are resumed. Orthodox Judaism holds that the emotional relationship enhances the sexual relationship and vice versa. Feminist thinkers believe that women's sexuality and difficulty in engaging with their husbands, caused by the rules, is not taken seriously. Adler (1991) believes that Judaism is uninterested in women's experience of sexuality, even though women themselves may feel that their sexuality is directly impacted by the rules. This results in the impossibility of a feminist Judaism. Given the mixed results of the present study, it could be those who find the rules exciting enjoy a deeper emotional relationship. Current literature does show an unsurprising correlation between relationship satisfaction and levels of intimacy (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Schaefer & Olson, 1981) although it doesn't research the causal relationship between the two. It would be interesting to explore whether there is a correlation between physical and emotional relationship for women who observe the purity laws and if so, which is cause and which is effect. There is a strong need for the counselling psychologist to acquire greater insight into the experience of these women, which would lead them to devise more effective treatment strategies. Knowing the etiology of the difficulty makes it possible to treat it at source.

4.4 Super-Ordinate Theme 3: The Phenomenon of Relational Space

The third super-ordinate theme, the phenomenon of relational space, presents another set of revealing findings. The first part of these findings explores participants' experiences of feeling either very close to, or very distant from, their husbands; like the previous theme, this poses a paradox that demands resolution. The second part of the findings explores again participants' varied and sometimes paradoxical expression of feelings that the rules give them a sense either of freedom and space or of intrusion and encroachment. Interestingly, and in contrast to previous themes, participants floated between each sub-theme and finding. One spoke of feeling very rejected, resentful and emotionally hurt during times of separation; for example, she expressed feeling low about her appearance. Yet the same participant also expressed the contradictory feeling that separation made her feel closer to her husband, as it gave them the opportunity to work on every part of the relationship, both physical and emotional. Yet the participant appeared unaware of this paradox, speaking of her experiences of separation as liberating yet painful. These paradoxical feelings can be reconciled by the argument that the pain of separation is a necessary precursor to the joy of reunion. The contradiction might also perhaps be explained by participants' awareness that 'connection' can occur on many levels, physical, emotional, social, and cognitive.

Some, however, said that the rules create a distance between them and their husband, which makes the period of separation difficult. One mentioned that during the period of separation she feels the need to physically remove herself from her husband in order to save herself from feeling rejected by him.

Another noted that after she had a miscarriage it had been excruciatingly difficult for her to lack any comfort through physical touch, due to her bleeding. This same participant, however, did mention that she thinks it is a good idea to be obliged to have sexual relations; although she finds part of her experience difficult and distancing, other aspects of the rules do benefit her relationship. This reinforces the notion that women are constantly constructing, reevaluating and reinterpreting the rules, rather than holding to a single ‘truth’ or ‘feeling’ across their whole experience.

Within the narratives of the second part of the superordinate theme, one participant expressed that the rules gave her safety within her first, difficult marriage, shielding her from rejection by her husband, whose refusal to touch her, she understood, was due to the rules rather than his own lack of desire. Two others expressed experiencing separation as freedom to relax from mandatory sexual relations; they valued the opportunity to say no. But they also spoke of a sense of intrusion in having to send their knickers to the Rabbi to be checked. Some expressed resentment of this as deeply intrusive, and although a few comply, others have the agency to refuse, in one case going so far as to express the view that she had expected the rules to protect, rather than to betray, her.

Rejection and the ensuing sadness were foregrounded in the present study, supported by the findings of Labinsky et al. (2009) that women felt rejected during the period of Niddah, as they felt their husbands withdraw from them at that time. In the present study, retaliation appeared to be one dysfunctional response; one participant expressed the view that if she feels pushed away she might as well push herself away first, shifting the initiative from her husband to herself. Another explained that her husband’s ability to keep the rules more easily than she can makes her feel rejected, and she therefore distances herself from him, creating a vicious circle of rejection. This theme of retaliation as a form of self-defence is replicated in Turgel’s (2012) study, in which participants distanced themselves from their husbands as their needs for comfort and intimacy were unmet. Turgel (2012) suggests that these feelings of rejection may be self-inflicted as a possible form of self-protection.

In the present study, another aspect of distance and rejection appeared in one participant’s account of her first time engaging in sexual relations with her husband; she noted that her need for physical assurance was denied her due to the laws, leaving her feeling dirty. As mentioned above, studies have explored the impact of foreplay, but few consider after-play, even though other studies have found that men and women desire both physically and emotionally affectionate behaviour after sexual activity (Hughes & Kruger, 2011; Muise, Giang, & Impett, 2014; van Anders, Edelman, Wade, & Samples-Steele, 2013). The limited research into the deleterious effects of lack of after-play certainly suggests that Emma’s experience is not uncommon.

Participants in both the present study and Turgel (2012) express the feeling that during the period of Niddah they instigate negative communication patterns with their husbands, which are potentially conducive to marital dissatisfaction and further distancing. Whether it is the husbands distancing themselves, as in the present study and Labinsky et al. (2009), or the women distancing themselves as seen also in this study and in Turgel (2012), the key point is that perhaps the distance is experienced as a consequence of obeying the rules. Marmon (1999) expands on the concept of distancing, finding that during Niddah tension increased within the couple's relationship, taking the form of more quarrels and a lack of physical reassurance from the husbands. These findings support the current study's theme of distance; the women gave accounts of craving physical reassurance from their spouses, whether after the first time of engaging in sexual relations, going through a miscarriage, or in general day-to-day support. They express the view that the lack of this physical attention results in rejection and low self-esteem but also that it aggravates tension within the relationship, a tension all the more stressful because it is self-imposed. This highlights that participants' distress was not related simply to lack of sexual relations, or to lack of after-play, but to their need for physical touch and comfort during the prohibited period.

Some participants, as mentioned above, gave accounts of feeling very distanced and rejected by their husbands, while others, conversely, gave accounts of the physical distance actually strengthening their relationship. These findings are replicated in part by Hartman and Marmon (2004); the women in their study expressed feelings of suffocated by the separation period, which, the authors argue, impacted their emotional and psychological health.

Women expressed the feeling that the period of separation permits them the freedom to say "no – not right now." Participants in the studies by Marmon (1999) and Turgel (2012) similarly mention the strong emotional and physical benefits of separation, enhancing the robustness of the findings of the present study. Hartman and Marmon (2004) document women's appreciation of having time to themselves and being able to say no to sexual relations during the time of separation.

The paradox continues with accounts of extreme distance from a husband during Niddah, coupled with accounts of extreme closeness. This paradox could perhaps be explained by research on attachment; Hollist and Miller (2005) suggest the ability to regulate emotions within a romantic relationship is linked to attachment style. Bretherton & Munholland (2008) found that avoidant-attached individuals seek to reduce their distress by removing themselves; other studies have found that avoidant-attached individuals have an increased need for independence and self-focused goals (Arriaga et al, 2014). Individual differences within the attachment styles of the participants in this study may explain why their experiences contrast so strongly, and why some separate themselves further during Niddah, while others enjoy the space as a time for a relaxing break. The contrast

between feeling rejected during time of separation and feeling safe at other times is related to the individual's attachment style and ability to retain a sense of closeness to their attachment figure when they were physically unavailable to them.

Although these speculations regarding attachment offer alternative insights, the present study is unable to examine the relationship between attachment styles and experience of family purity laws. It does, however, consider the possibility of a link between women's adult attachment style and their experience of observing the laws, in particular those governing the period of separation. Understanding the role of attachment within one's experiences of these laws could provide greater insight into what is challenging for the women - is it merely the separation itself, or is it the change of behaviour elicited by either spouse that creates these difficulties? Or is their distress rooted in a lack of the physical touch and care they so much desire, rather than in a lack of sexual relations? The insecurities experienced by relatively disempowered married women would be a fruitful source of investigation; one significant variable might, for example, be whether the women were economically independent and/or had fulfilling employment to occupy them during periods of enforced abstinence.

Powerlessness was an important recurrent theme in the interviews. Hartmon and Marmon (2004) similarly found women reluctant to consult their Rabbis about their purity, as this made them feel demoralized and powerless. Equally, Labinsky et al. (2009) and Turgel (2012) found that women experienced feelings of shame, of exposure and of an invasion of their privacy. The difference, however, between this and previous studies, is that the theme of invasion and exposure was related to attendance at the Mikvah; as some of Marmon's (2008) participants mentioned, it was the presence of the attendant that caused the discomfort. Regardless, both studies elicited feelings of exposure, exemplified by Emma's account of feeling complete and utter intrusion into her personal space. Emma relates this intrusion to the rules, perhaps hinting that it is not the Mikveh alone that is to blame for her feeling of being invaded.

Giving their knickers to the Rabbi to be checked for blood led women to express feelings of exposure, shame, and violation. Some spoke of feeling angry at being controlled by men in this way and Green (1990) notes that a threat to bodily integrity is one dimension of traumatic stress. Irritability at this aspect of the law, expressed by the women in the present study, has also been found to reduce a partner's willingness to show support (Lane & Hobfoll, 2002; Mills & Turnbull, 2004). This lack of spousal support could perhaps make women appear even more distant and therefore make the adjustment to intimacy even more difficult. It is possible, although this study does not have the scope to explore the issue, that those who find reuniting with their husband difficult and monotonous are also those who feel the most irritable and exposed by rules that permit the invasion of their private

space by another man. However, several other reasons might explain why some women find adjusting to intimacy harder than others.

The women in the present study expressed appreciation of the protective space available to them during times of separation, highlighting that these times perhaps offer real benefits – though perhaps the relief and benefits would not be necessary if the enforced separation were not obligatory, a finding confirmed by Turgel (2012). This concept of temporal space as a ‘natural break’ reflects the findings of Labinsky et al. (2009), two thirds of whose participants reported feeling relieved upon entering the separation period, and a quarter of participants deferring going to the Mikvah for emotional reasons. Labinsky et al (2009) does not explain why the women felt relieved, whereas the present study, like Turgel (2012), explains that the women seemed to express relief at the intermission of their sexual obligations to their husbands and enjoyed the freedom this space offered them. Nevertheless, it seemed that they would have been happy with non-sexual touch during these times, and would not have perceived this as an encroachment; it was the regulation mandating obligatory sex that they found so irksome. If so, this would perhaps explain the paradox of their experiences of both liberation and rejection during these times, enhancing the contextually specific nature of these experiences.

4.5 Super-Ordinate Theme 4: Desire for meaningful attachment

The final super-ordinate theme highlights women’s accounts of their experiences as fostering meaningful relationships with G-d, their husbands and even themselves, through observation of the laws. These accounts express a strong sense that purification can bring them much closer to their husbands, and the women express the hope that their marital relationship, both physical and emotional, will in this way be improved. How far this pious wish expresses what the participant believed she ‘ought’ to say, cannot be determined. One described the Mikvah as a space to pray and hope that her marriage would flourish, but then expressed regret that her hopes and dreams had been met by severe rejection; she expressed a feeling of being down by the rules. Another spoke of the Mikvah experience as offering her greater agency; she expressed enjoyment of the experience, which she said made her feel as pure as she had felt on her marriage day. Another spoke of this act of purification as therapeutic and cleansing, a process of healing before reconnecting to her husband. Lastly, participants express how observation of the purification laws is meaningful to them as it makes them feel connected to G-d. One commented that it was comforting to know that she brought spirituality into her home; another mentioned that it was the one thing they do for themselves in a spiritual way. Again, it is impossible to tell whether and how far these expressions of piety were manufactured for the benefit of the researcher.

Hartmon and Marmon’s (2004) findings are in line with the themes discussed here; they conclude that

women appreciate family purity laws because they are central to their religious life and religious identity. One participant expressed pride in the fact that these rules distinguish her from an animal, allowing her to create a religious identity by bringing spirituality into her home. These findings are also compatible with those of Turgel (2012), whose participants said that the Mikvah offered them a feeling of rebirth and purification, echoing Sarah's account that going to the Mikvah feels rather like getting married, entering into a new stage of life. Two thirds of the participants in a study by Labinsky et al. (2009) found the Mikvah religiously enhancing and compared it to a rebirthing experiences. Both Labinsky et al. (2009) and Turgel (2012) noted the metaphor 'rebirth experience', which was not used by any of the participants in the present study, although their accounts were in alignment with this concept. Regardless of terminology, a common theme in all the studies was that participants expressed the belief that observing these rules, in particular, going to the Mikvah, allowed them to feel closer to G-d. Studies report that religiosity, in particular participation in personal spiritual growth rituals such as the Mikvah, enhances marital satisfaction (Goddard, Marshall, Olson, & Dennis, 2012a; Mahoney, 2010; Olson, Goddard, & Marshall, 2013; Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008). This hypothesis is supported by the present study, in which women expressed the belief that Mikvah attendance helps them feel closer to G-d, and facilitates their reconnection with their husbands, thereby strengthening the marital bond. One participant mentioned that observing family purity law is good for her marriage and the developing relationship with her husband. This might suggest that spiritual growth enhances relational growth, though the hypothesis would need to be tested in order to be confirmed, as it is of course possible that the connection is contingent rather than causal. Goldman et al. (2012, 2013) confirmed a finding of the current study and found spiritual faith and hope, including the belief that G-d is part of the marriage, to be connected to marital commitment, although participants do not analyse the nature or impact of the benefits of religious observance for their marriages. A regression study by Olsen et al (2016) also found religious observance to be linked to marital well-being and that both religious and personal values are linked to marital satisfaction. It is therefore possible that these women's experience of enhanced marital satisfaction is provided not only by their religious values but also by the personal values of purification and spirituality they derive from observing the rules. Ross (2004) however believes that although women

4.6 Conflicting Messages Explained

Throughout the findings, conflicting messages emerge, and as mentioned above, some women can have totally opposite and ambivalent feelings within the same experience. Likewise, some women's experiences are radically different from those of others. One such difference relates to attachment, though it would be reductionist to take this to be the sole reason for the differences. The results revealed that some participants were strictly observant, regardless of whether they liked the rules or

not; others were less strict, refusing, for example, to send their knickers to be checked by a Rabbi. Others said that they differed from their husbands in terms of their commitment to keeping the laws. A different explanation for these discrepancies is offered by Guterman (2006, 2008), who found that modern orthodox Jews encounter identity conflicts, evidenced by their reports of partial transgression of the family purity laws during the separation period. Women reported feeling conflicted between constraint to keep the rules due to guilt and fear, and the safety and containment provided by observance. This conflict between collective security and personal agency is a central issue with many religions and raises the question of how the therapist can empower clients to make independent lifestyle choices without imposing the therapist's own values. Schachter (2002) suggests that identity conflict in relation to sexuality is evident among modern orthodox Jews, possibly in consequence of the conflict between a traditional religious life and a modern western one. Trying to live by both may result in ambivalence and cognitive dissonance or disequilibrium. This hypothesis is supported by findings that the same participants believed both that premarital sexual behaviour was 'extremely wrong' and 'not such a big deal'. Schachter's participants were aware of this paradox, which seems to be a feature of the attempt to reconcile religious tradition and 'modern' Jewish orthodoxy (Schachter, 2002). It may be that the term 'modern' is something of a misnomer; a problem of the modern world is not necessarily in and of itself 'modern'. This issue seems a fruitful topic for further investigation, due to the potentially serious psychological impact of the conflict between tradition and modernity for those whose identities are framed by religious values in a modern world that perhaps finds their lifestyle alien.

Another question prompted by the present study is that of women's general perception of their adherence to family purity laws. Their accounts seem to fluctuate between appreciation of the benefits and resentment of restrictions they find difficult and painful. Some expressed feelings of paradoxical liberation and entrapment by the rules; others, equally paradoxically, expressed the view that the rules brought them distance and closeness. Some gave accounts of excitement, whereas others or even the same person described their sexual lives as monotonous. It was striking that participants themselves appeared entirely unaware of the ambivalence and self-contradiction in their stated views, raising many questions about the unconscious cognitive processes driving these responses. Marmon (1999) found that women's mixed and fluctuating feelings about the rules vary according to their stages of life, marriage and personal needs. Festinger (1957) found, unsurprisingly, that women felt uncomfortable with this cognitive dissonance and sought to adjust their attitude or beliefs in order to reduce these uncomfortable feelings. This matches the finding of the present study, in which a participant gave an account of trying to 'tweak' her brain to persuade herself that although she finds the separation period difficult, and feels angry about it, she is nevertheless undergoing it for the right reasons. It would be interesting to see whether participants are aware of this dissonance and if so, how they feel about it. However, it is also important to respect the ethical principle that requires

researchers to avoid any type of question that might cause participants distress, so if this issue were raised, it would need to be presented with the utmost sensitivity. Lastly, as mentioned above, this dissonance does make sense and is to some extent to be expected, as participants' feelings would be context-dependant; keeping the rules entails going through many different experiences.

Ross (2004) writes of the conflict women experience due to observing the rules in terms similar to those employed by the women in the present study. Feminism is a modern ideology which accords men and women equal status, even within religion. However, religion asserts, by contrast, the gender inequality of the sexes, thereby creating the conditions for the conflicted feelings evinced by the women in the current study, who feel powerless and unheard. Despite liking parts of the rules, they found others extremely difficult and even unbearable. Ross therefore believes that women can be made to feel more empowered and equal to men if the laws were reinterpreted to reflect the contemporary understandings and feelings of those bound by them. Plaskow (1990) writes about this conflict, commenting that it would be much easier for women if the understanding and meaning of the rules were not set in stone, but considered capable of reinterpretation without loss of religious faith and commitment. Women would thereby be relieved of a considerable burden of guilt.

4.7 Research Claims

Having examined and evaluated all the key findings of the present study, I will now consider its limitations. Due to the nature of IPA, the findings are based on my own personal interpretations, a potential limitation which I have attempted to address through constant self-reflection. As the study is only conducted on a small sample of 8 Orthodox Jewish women who are, perhaps more vocal than others, given that they volunteered for the interview, the findings may seem resistant to generalization. However, Smith and Eatough (2008) emphasize that a unique aspect of IPA is its generalizability to a "broader context" (p.41). Therefore, although the sample was drawn from a specific cultural group, both the findings and the clinical implications derived are arguably not only transferable to other orthodox Jewish women but theoretically generalizable (Smith et al., 2009) to the population at large. Nevertheless, researchers engaged in qualitative research rarely speak of 'generalising' findings, referring instead to their 'transferability'. There is an important difference between the two terms: 'generalizability' involves the extension of findings from a study of a sample population to the population at large. Generalizability normally applies only to quantitative methods, while transferability does not make sweeping claims, but permits the application of the findings to a comparable group or situation. Given the great number of contextual, cultural and other variables involved in sexual relationships, it would be unwise to attempt to generalize from the findings of the present study. However, these findings can be of value, not necessarily solely to counselling psychologists, but to anyone working with women who follow similar rules to the women in this

study. These findings and conclusions can inform a wide range of health-care professional work with this population, throwing light on the complex problems experienced by women such as these due to their strict observance of – or infraction of – religious rules. Despite the limitations of a restricted population and sample size, the results derived from the interviews created data rich in quality. Participants seemed able to open up and explore their experiences in depth, offering a ‘snapshot’ of their experiences that fulfils the requirement of IPA for understanding experiences in the context in which they are presented.

A more fundamental limitation is inherent in the nature of IPA research, which aims to understand the subjective experience of participants. However, the only way such insight can be achieved is through participants own self-reports, couched in the language available to them. The researcher, in this case myself, assumes that the ‘subjective experience’ so reported is an accurate record of participants’ subjective experience. In fact, there is no objective way in which the reliability of participants’ accounts can be tested. This is why the desirability effect is so problematic, especially in the case of the present study, in which I had to consider the possibility that the ‘subjective experience’ reported by my participants was to some extent at least modified by their assumption that a religiously observant researcher might disapprove of comments perceived to be seditious or recalcitrant, even given the protection of confidentiality. However, I cannot be certain they knew of my religiosity or level of adherence, although they probably drew their own conclusions from my dress and the ring on my finger.

My self-selected participants volunteered for the study very quickly. IPA does not seek participants on the basis of representativeness so it is possible that although participants may have wished to share their experiences, these are not experiences that are generalizable to the wider population, since they can apply only to those who feel themselves bound by the strict religious rules of a patriarchal culture that has little in common with the liberal, secular lifestyles of British women. It is therefore important to take into account the fact that the experience of other orthodox Jewish women, who were not willing to share their experiences, may be quite different. In short, the findings and conclusion of the present study may represent an anomaly. This is all the more likely, since a primary rule of statistics is that the smaller the sample, the less representative it is likely to be. However, this is a common limitation to all researchers in that they only have access to those participants who are willing to share their experiences.

Another limitation of the research could be that it was conducted on women who had been married for only a maximum of five years. This means that the findings cannot easily be transferable to those married for longer periods of time. In particular, it is more than likely that those married for a longer

period will have started families, and that their attitudes to the rules of purity may have changed over time. The context in which they experience the rules, would also perhaps, but not inevitably, differ from that of women married for longer. Finally, this study was conducted on orthodox Jewish women who appeared to be of a more modern background, one of the many styles of Judaism today. It is possible that the experience of ultra-orthodox Jews such as Chasidim or Haredim will differ sharply from those of the modern orthodox, who are more directly caught between two worlds.

Lastly, a limitation of the study could also be explained through homogeneity; most participants reported happy marriages, but one reported a 'bad' marriage. This would impact the way they understood their experiences of keeping the laws. To account for this in future research, one could give participants marital satisfaction questionnaires first, and based on that, recruit participants and look at experiences of family laws for those in a 'good marriage' in contrast to those in a 'bad or unsatisfactory marriage'.

4.8 Clinical Implications

Throughout this research study, I have endeavoured to keep in mind the clinical implications applicable to the field of counselling psychology. The study has highlighted new findings that have not yet been noted in other studies; while contributing to existing literature it approaches the topic from a different perspective. To begin with, this study adds to the literature on multicultural psychology, with important implications for counselling psychologists working with individuals across cultures. This is the second British study conducted from a counselling psychology perspective to explore women's experiences of adhering to Jewish family purity laws. The present study explores their experiences within the first five years of marriage, and to date is the first study of this kind to be conducted. It explores the psychological impact of observing these rules and how the clinical implications of the findings can be incorporated into counselling therapy for clients.

Not only does the current study contribute to an under-researched topic, it also throws light on Orthodox Jewish culture, customs and practices. This research can help counselling psychologists develop multicultural competencies, in particular, in "understanding the worldview of the culturally different client" (Sue et al., 1982, p.481), thereby ensuring that the treatment intervention used does not contradict the client's beliefs or values, which could hinder the client's progress (Bergin, 1980; Cunningham, 1983; Gass, 1984; Kuyken, Brewin, Power & Furnham, 1992). It is important that the therapist does not arrogate to him or herself the right to dictate to the client, but respects their beliefs. However, If the therapist does feel genuine concern that the client's worldview is causing distress, then the client should be guided into understanding how they can make independent informed lifestyle choices and changes. The task of the therapist is to engage with the client's subjective experience,

understand what this means to them, encouraging the client's personal agency. This is undertaken in the hope that empowering the client would enable them to feel empowered to make their own informed decisions about the rule, rather than feel they have to follow the rules for whatever reason and regardless of the implication for themselves.

While this study understands that there is a wide range of cultures and that therapeutic techniques need to be adapted for minority populations (Ibrahim & Arredondo, 1986; Smith, 1982; Sue, 1990; Sue & Sue, 1990; Sue et al., 1982), it also recognises that these rules are not only typical of Jewish practices. The findings therefore arguably have transcultural implications and could prove helpful to any counselling psychologist or social worker working with clients adhering to these or similar rules.

Although positive psychological implications emerged throughout some of the themes, for the sake of the clinical implications, I will focus mainly on those that appeared to cause participants the greatest psychological distress.

Participants expressed feelings of pressure and anxiety about sexual relations, as well as strong guilt feelings. They claimed to find reuniting with their husbands difficult and to feel pressurized to have sexual relations with them during the period of permitted touch. It seems likely that this represents their experience, as it is difficult to see why women would otherwise admit to such painful and potentially embarrassing feelings. To ease the transition into this period, counselling psychologists could assist women or even couples with a reunion plan to make the return to sexual relations easier. They could also devise a plan for enhancing containment and safety during the period of touch. This could foster empowerment in women who felt trapped, with little space to decide whether they wanted sexual relations or not. This plan would offer participants the prospect of increased safety and containment within themselves and their relationship; it might also facilitate their enjoyment of the physical relationship with their husbands or at least, reduce the anxiety and pressure about the need to have sexual relations.

The findings of the study also showed that women appear to have experienced monotony and lack of excitement in sexual relations, rather than the joy and thrill they craved. To tackle this, therapists might find working with the couple more productive, and using their knowledge of family purity laws - perhaps even educating themselves on other orthodox laws on sex - they can create a way to make sexual relations more exciting for women. Given participants' commitment to the laws, therapeutic interventions should not encourage couples to transgress from their observance, which would represent a grave breach of ethics. Instead, as noted above, clients should be led to understand how they can acquire agency in order to make independent choices – leaving them to determine whether or not to abide by the rules. What matters is that the client keeps these rules because she herself wants to,

not because a patriarchal culture or anyone else demands it of her/him. Treatment plans therefore need to accommodate the client's current religious values and lifestyle. Ribner (2003) highlights the need to take account of the client's religious sensitivity when conducting sex therapy with orthodox Jewish clients. For example, Jewish law prohibits external ejaculation and this should be taken into consideration in designing sexual treatment protocols. Ribner notes that clinicians working with clients for whom an activity is prohibited on religious grounds would need to be more creative in their interventions and adapt the treatment plan to ensure that no conflict arises within the client's belief and value system. This of course, is an option only if clients themselves desire such adaptation in treatment.

When treatment for sexual or emotional issues caused by observing family purity laws conflicts with adherence, the counselling psychologist should be encouraged to liaise with the Rabbi regarding the treatment plan. The Rabbi, who is empowered to make legal decisions, could grant permission for special treatment in individual cases (Donin, 1972). In this case, the counselling psychologist would have to give the Rabbi the whole treatment plan in order to assist the Rabbi's decision-making. The therapist must be open to adapting the treatment plan to bring it in line with the client's values (Ribner, 2003). This guidance, derived from some participants' expression of dissatisfaction with their sexual relations, is transcultural, in that it can assist all counselling psychologists working with religious clients, regardless of their religion, to ensure they understand and respect the rules by which their clients live. If necessary, with consent, they may work alongside the client's religious leader, who will be able to shed light on the interpretation of the rules and make exceptions when necessary.

The distance from their husbands expressed by the women in another important finding that can have implications for counselling psychologists. Some participants had apparently developed negative emotions that made them feel detached from their husbands. They explained that they also changed their behaviour during this period, physically removing themselves from their husbands in order to protect themselves from feeling rejected. It appears, according to these findings, that women who adopt deleterious behaviours as a result of their negative feelings would benefit from reflecting on these and hopefully change from dysfunctional behaviours that widen the separation from their husbands to behaviours that will help them remain connected emotionally despite the physical distance. One participant spoke of trying to 'tweak' her thought process, although this appeared to offer her little relief. With the right therapeutic intervention, if she wanted, she could be helped to tweak her attitudes in such a way as to make the separation period less difficult for her. However, if a client appeared really distressed, the intervention would aim to empower them to act on their beliefs and on what gives them true happiness. It would not benefit the client to help them to 'tweak' their thoughts to help them slavishly 'believe' something they do not believe.

A similar technique that counselling psychologists could adopt in light of this study is to help clients enhance the emotional connection with their husbands during separation periods. This could be done either with the individual or with the couple; in the latter case, they could engage in communication training (Baucom & Epstein, 1990; Guerney, 1977) in order to retain a close connection through verbal communication. While physical closeness is of course important, couples could be led to appreciate that a “marriage of true minds” is no less important, and a source of strength during periods of separation. Indeed, if couples could be shown that “separation” is a misnomer, and that this is a positive period of spiritual bonding, they might be able to see it less as an ordeal than as a time of special emotional rewards for both partners. Finkenauer & Hazam (2000) believe that marital distance will be reduced if couples are encouraged to be open with each other and share feelings and thoughts throughout their difficult separation period. Couples will be enabled and liberated to talk about the difficulty of adhering to the laws.

The aspect of the results that examines the couple’s attachment could offer interesting implications for therapy. Counselling psychologists could create an attachment focus therapy intervention. Therapists who are emotionally responsive and offer clients a safe and containing relationship can help clients with affect regulation (Bowlby, 1988; Holmes, 2001; Mallinckrodt, Gantt & Coble, 1995). Through this safe therapeutic relationship, participants would hopefully learn to cope with separation and be able to adapt these skills to their romantic relationships, helping them to respond in a more functional manner than by adopting abrupt behaviours such as purposely removing themselves physically from their spouses.

Women also spoke of the difficult feeling that the rules made them vulnerable and intruded into their personal space. Turgel (2012) suggests that those who found the Mikvah difficult also found reuniting with their husband harder. It is also possible that the intrusion these women feel from the Rabbi may impact their sexual relations with their husbands. Counselling psychologists could benefit from understanding every minor aspect of the family purity rules and their impact on women. Having knickers checked by a man might appear insignificant but this study shows it made the women feel disturbed and powerless – if it were not for the religious context, such behaviour would undoubtedly be labelled fetishist. Empowering women in therapy can help them deal better with their feelings of powerlessness. They can be given tools to help them understand that their own sensitivities should not be subordinated to a religious culture. The problem is not that they send their knickers to be checked. Some women don’t mind doing this. They are adults, and have the right to do so. The problem is that women are being coerced into doing something they don’t want to do – the very definition of lack of freedom - leaving them with a strong feeling of powerlessness. One aim of therapy should surely be to empower women to take back this freedom. The British Psychology Society Division of Counselling Psychology, 2005, states that a client’s social context and any disempowerment should be recognised

and that the client should be empowered to take back control. The idea is to grant clients personal agency over their choices. For humanistic psychologists such as Maslow (1943) and Rogers (1951), freedom is a necessary condition of a fully healthy functioning human being. Consciously reflecting with the client on their behaviour could help them achieve their goals and enable them to exercise the power to act as they wish. If clients feel free to say no, even if they choose not to exercise this freedom, they will feel more confident that the choice was their own rather than someone else's; they will not feel forced by whatever authority, in this case, by the rules of their religion. The participants struggle with feelings of coercion to obey religious laws, either for religious reasons or to please their husbands. These women do not feel they have autonomy to make their own decisions; if they are doing something they perhaps wouldn't have chosen to do themselves, this coercion should be addressed in therapy. Therapy should empower clients to consciously think through their dilemma, to express their own needs and wants, and to have the confidence to say no if they wish. Clients should be helped to feel that they can make their own decisions without external interference or fear of being ostracised because of their decisions. The difficulty with religious clients is that they may feel that the religion rules their life, depriving them of agency and power. Indeed, the point of religious law is precisely this – the religious individual accepts a higher, divine authority as dispensed by its human intermediaries, the clergy; the rules are not meant to be obeyed only when it is convenient to do so, but also when it is not. Nevertheless, the counselling psychologist should be able to help clients discover their own personal strengths, empowering them to take control and achieve active rather than merely passive compliance with religious law, if that is what the religious client wants. These clients, with the help of the therapist, should in this way be empowered to make their own independent decisions.

Finally, it is important for all counselling psychologists to take into consideration the unique profile of each client and their individual differences in keeping the rules. Each client showed very similar yet distinct experiences of observation. For example, during the period of touch, all participants but one experienced a sense of closeness to their husbands; the single exception spoke of her 'bad' marriage, and of experiencing severe rejection by her husband. These religious rules could promote rejection, as one is expected to have sexual relations on the night of the Mikvah and for the two weeks following; failure to do so can have negative psychological implications. Counselling psychologists could work on these feelings with their clients, help them deal with feelings of rejection, and work with them to maintain a high level of self-esteem. This study can help counselling psychologists understand the nature of rejection and therefore enable them to fully tune in to their clients.

4.9 Future research

The present study produced many findings relevant to counselling psychology, although as it

progressed and the richer the results became, the more I felt it necessary to conduct further research into this currently under-researched but important area. For example, no qualitative research has been conducted on husbands' experiences of observing the laws regulating sexual activity and purification. As mentioned in my methodology, I did try during the pilot phase to conduct this research on men, although I felt that perhaps they would feel inhibited from opening up to a religious woman like myself. I therefore believe that although such research would be most valuable, it should be conducted by a researcher with whom these men will be comfortable and who will be able to elicit illuminating insights.

This research studied the experiences of recently married women. I believe further research should work within a similar five-year time-frame, for example, with women who have been married for five to ten years, ten to fifteen, and so on. The findings could be compared to those of Turgel (2012), whose participants had been married for considerably longer than mine. I would hypothesize that women's attitudes to the laws of purity might well evolve over time, as their relationships mature and they acquire new identities as mothers as well as wives.

This research study was conducted on a particular 'type' of orthodox Jew. In order to extend its transferability, it could be replicated with other Jewish sects; for example, Chassidic Jews may have even stricter rules and therefore different experiences from those of the modern orthodox women I interviewed. The study could be further replicated to include other religious groups, such as devout Muslims, thereby further extending its transferability. This would enhance our understanding of the different marital practices of different religions.

The results showed clearly that some women were more eager to keep the rules, whereas others 'cheated' or 'broke' them. For example, some women admitted to sometimes touching their husbands during prohibited periods, while others would not, though it is naturally impossible to ascertain whether they were being completely honest. Research into women's experience of actual adherence to the laws and how it feels to either break or obey them, for whatever reason, would be valuable. Such research might focus on determining whether it is personality type, attachment style or anything else that differentiates their degree of observance. Guterman (2006) found that more rules were infringed in the second week of Niddah than the first, although he does not explore the reasons with his sample, nor does he consider the impact on women of regarding or disregarding the rules. A participant in the present study spoke of feeling 'guilt' about even thinking about transgressing the rules. This would prove a fruitful area for further investigation.

The scant research in the field also lacks mixed-methods analysis combining quantitative and qualitative data. Such an approach might well yield firmer conclusions and open up new areas for

research.

4.10 Reflexivity

As mentioned in my methodology, I was aware, that as an orthodox Jewish woman, it would be impossible to ignore the fact that my own personal perspective on this subject might impact the study. What I did not realise was how greatly the results would impact. What I had neglected now became more 'apparent' to me and did impact my own response to the rules, both positively and negatively. As mentioned in my reflective diary (see Appendix) I wonder if these feelings were always unconsciously present, or whether they arose as a result of my research.

Another strong challenge for me, as someone who also adheres to the rules and has independent opinions and views, was to remain as empathically open as possible (Finlay, 2008a). I believe my language, both verbal and non-verbal, made it obvious to my interviewees that I was a married orthodox Jew, who, I am sure, they assumed also kept the rules. Although I was initially nervous that this might inhibit them from expressing their experiences as openly as they did, perhaps for fear of my censoriousness, I believe that in fact the affinity allowed us to form a 'bond', enabling them to connect with me as someone who would understand their feelings and frustrations, and to whom they could speak openly. I am, however, aware that I may be mistaken, at least in part, and that although they seemed very open, there may have been experiences they did withhold, perhaps due to fear of judgement from me. Throughout the interviews, I was therefore careful to remain as non-judgemental as possible, guarding my facial expressions, so that they would not be deterred from sharing confidences.

Before the interviews, I hypothesized the results. I expected participants to fall into one of two extreme categories: having either very positive or very negative, angry experiences. However, from the second interview, and even more so as I started on the analysis, I began to realise that their experiences were not as straightforward as I had anticipated; the experiences reported, like most experiences, were far more nuanced and complex. The interviews were more emotional than I had expected, which greatly increased my understanding of the participants' experiences.

The ultimate challenge for me concerned my anxieties about this research project. Reflecting on this during my first meeting with my supervisor encouraged me to be more confident in my ability to achieve. Often, in particular with the results section, I found the research process overwhelming and endured severe self-doubt about my academic proficiency. I struggled immensely with the interpretation of the IPA, often finding myself analysing the data thematically. Under supervision, together with peer support, I believe I managed to understand and make use of the interpretive part of

the IPA and became able to view my data at a level of depth I had not believed possible. I am and have always been someone who rushes through life, trying to get as much done in as short time as possible. This research did not allow me that luxury and made me realise that research is a laborious process that takes time, reflection, effort and the utmost energy. Although the time spent conducting the research has been stressful and difficult, I have a sense of achievement that I have never before felt. The reflective diary (see Appendix) has been extremely helpful in enabling me to deal with all the emotions that surfaced as a result of this study.

Overall, conducting this research exercise taught me more than I could ever imagine, about myself, my participants and about the varied experiences of observing the Jewish laws of sexual purity.

4.11 Conclusion

This study has provided a deep and detailed description of participants' experiences and will, I hope, make a modest but significant contribution to UK multicultural counselling psychology literature. My participants offered potentially illuminating insight into the strong and often paradoxical behaviours, cognitions and emotions evoked in women who observe family purity laws and combine to make their experience so complex. The dissonance participants spoke about included their experiences of feeling guilty, pressured and anxious yet also bound by these rules. These difficult sensations translated into an emotional juxtaposition, in which their feelings of monotony within the relationship were explored alongside apparently contradictory feelings that the rules add an excitement to their marriage that some believe they wouldn't otherwise enjoy. All participants also spoke about their equally paradoxical experience in terms of relational space; they noted feeling sometimes very close to their husbands, distant from them at others, intruded upon or free and liberated. Finally, all participants mentioned their experience of desire for some sort of connection with G-d and/or their husbands. I wonder whether they had ever had the opportunity to open up in this way to a non-judgemental but sympathetic listener, and whether they might have found the experience of engaging in the interviews liberating.

The findings of this study provide useful insight into the reported experience of women who adhere to family purity laws and could help counselling psychologists and other professionals working with this population group to develop or adapt appropriate interventions for such women. I believe this study adds significant value to counselling psychology as it not only adds to the currently limited research literature, but could assist the cultural understanding of therapists working with this group of people, positively enhancing their therapeutic interventions. I hope this study will inspire further research in this area, in order to develop our understanding of those adhering to these and comparable practices and our ability to help them.

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Appendices A,B,E,F,K,and L

**Due to its sensitive nature some of
this content has been removed**

Appendices

Appendix A: Study Advert

Department of Psychology
City University London

ORTHODOX JEWISH FEMALE PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN KEEPING FAMILY PURITY LAWS

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study on their experiences in keeping the family purity laws.

I am looking for volunteers who are willing to share their experiences and have been married between 1 and 5 years.

Your participation would involve 1 interview session, of which is approximately 60 minutes with myself the researcher, .

In appreciation for your time, you will receive
£25 WH SMITH gift vouchers

For more information about this study, or to take part,
please contact:

[REDACTED]
Or [REDACTED]
Psychology Department

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the City Universtiy London Research Ethics Committee, City University

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, please contact the Secretary to the University's Senate Research Ethics Committee on [REDACTED]

Appendix B: Information Sheet



Title of study

“An exploration of women’s experiences adhering to family purity laws within the first five years of marriage”

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to look at Jewish men’s perspective of observing Jewish Family Purity Laws and how this may have an impact on their marital relationship. I hope that the project will increase understanding of how limited sexual and physical contact in a marriage can impact the relationship. I also hope it increases valuable implications for marital therapy.

You will be asked to be interviewed by myself. The interview should last about 1 hour. I will ask you questions about your experience in observing Family Purity laws. I am particular interested in asking questions that will allow me to see how keeping these laws has affected your sexual as well as your marriage satisfaction.

This study aims to run for a year and a half from the start date. I am carrying out this study as part of a Professional Doctorate Counselling Psychology.

Why have I been invited?

The reason why you have been invited to participate in my study is because the focus of the study is on Jewish men who observe the family purity laws. Seven other Jewish males who also observe Family Purity Laws have been chosen to participate in this study.

Do I have to take part?

Participating in this study is entirely your choice and you are able to withdraw at any stage of the interview. You are also able to avoid answering any personal questions that you feel are too intrusive or personal for you to answer. If you don’t answer questions or decide you wish to withdraw, you will not be penalized in any way. If you do decide to volunteer for this study a consent form will be provided for you to sign, however, once this is signed you are still able to withdraw from the study at any time without any given reason.

What will happen if I take part?

- You will be involved for the hour of the interview and perhaps asked to come back for another interview
- The study will last one and a half years
- We will only meet during the times we have interviews
- If you feel the interview affected you in any way or you want to speak to me about something you are able to contact me on my email provided.
- The interviews will last for about an hour
- I am going to use a semi structured interview style. I have four main topics that I want to discuss and each topic will be followed on by questions that depend on your response. This will enable me to get as much depth of information as possible.
- The research method employed is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

- The research will take place at City University Social Science Building in London.

Expenses and Payments (if applicable)

- I will pay for your travel expenses to and from the interview
- I will give you a reward of £25 WH SMITH vouchers to thank you for taking part in my research.
- The gift vouchers will be presented to you at the end of the study.
- The reason these gift vouchers will be given to you is to thank you and show appreciation for your time and effort to help in my study.

What do I have to do?

What is required from you is to sit in an interview with me and be honest about your personal experiences as a Jewish married male who observes the Laws of Family Purity.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

By taking part in this project, I do not expect there to be any risk to yourself. I will debrief you fully once the interview is over. You will be asked whether taking part affected you and I will give you information of where you can get support if difficulties occur due to the interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

- £25 WH SMITH gift voucher
- A chance to voice your experiences and be listened to.
- An opportunity for Counselling Psychology Therapists to adapt their therapeutic interventions to help other Jewish men like yourself.
- A chance to give the wider community an understanding of the experiences of living with Family Purity Rules and what impact that can have on you

What will happen when the research study stops?

All information that has any chance of revealing you identity will be kept in a locked filing cabinet that only I am able to access. When the study is over, this information will be destroyed so that it is no longer usable or accessible. If at any time during the study you wish to withdraw your consent, your information from that point will be destroyed and not used.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

- I will be the only person to have any access to the information regarding your personal data
- Your audio and the transcription of your audio will be kept in a locked filing cabinet that only I have access to
- The only time confidentiality will have to be broken is if you disclose information were;
 - You are aware of criminal activity
 - Someone is at harm of violence or abuse
 - Serious self-harm or harm to others.
- The stored records containing your personal information will be destroyed so that they are no longer accessible to anyone including myself.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The study is a required part of the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at City University. The results of the study will form part of my thesis and will be stored in the university's library. The results will also be published. If you would like I will also send you a copy of the results.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You are free to withdraw at any time without any explanation. You will not be penalised for withdrawing from the study.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: "A Males View on Jewish Family Purity Laws and the Impact it has on His Marriage Satisfaction"

You could also write to the Secretary at:

[Redacted]
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
Research Office, E214
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB

Email: [Redacted]

City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been approved by City University London Psychology Research Ethics Committee

Further information and contact details

[Redacted]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix C: Consent Form



Title of Study:

“An exploration of women’s experiences adhering to family purity laws within the first five years of marriage”

Ethics approval code: PSYCH (P/F) 14/15 170

Please initial box

1.	<p>I agree to take part in the above City University London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records.</p> <p>I understand this will involve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being interview by the researcher • Allowing the video to be audiotaped • Making myself available for further interview should that be required 	
2.	<p>This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To transcribe our interview • To analyse our interview in order to create my findings <p>I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published. The identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation.</p> <p>I understand that I have given approval for the name of the City were I live to be used in the final report of the project and in future publications.</p> <p>.</p> <p>.</p>	
3.	<p>I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.</p>	
4.	<p>I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.</p>	
5.	<p>I agree to take part in the above study.</p>	

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

In consistence with IPA, I expect that the questions will constantly be evolving across the interviews, allowing flexibility for the participant's experiences to emerge across the interview. Below is a guidance and indicative list of the areas that I would aim to address in the interview.

1. I am wondering what motivated you to take part in the study?
2. How long have you kept the laws for?
3. What motivated you to keep the laws?
4. How do you feel about keeping the laws?
5. Please can you describe your experiences of not touching your husband?
6. How does the period of not touching make you feel?
7. How is your experience of transitioning from not touching to touching?
8. How do you feel about going to the Mikvah?
9. How do you experience getting ready for the Mikvah?
10. What is your experience of touching your husband for the first time after periods of not touching?
11. How does it feel coming home from the Mikvah and being greeted by your husband?
12. How does it feel being able to touch your husband again?
13. How would you explain your experiences of going from touching to not touching?
14. How do you experience getting your period?
15. What has been like to talk about your experiences with me today?
16. Is there anything you may like to add before we finish?

Appendix E: Debrief Information



“An exploration of women’s experiences adhering to family purity laws within the first five years of marriage”

DEBRIEF INFORMATION

Thank you for taking part in this study! Now that it’s finished we’d like to explain the rationale behind the work.

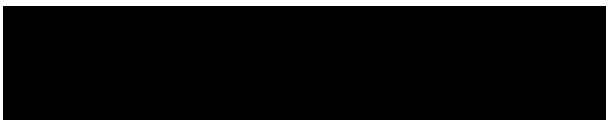
My research aims was to study the impact on how adhering to the laws of family purity can impact your relationship as well as others areas of your life.

My aim is that counselling psychologists can use these findings to help them adapt their interventions to best suit the Jewish minority. It will allow them to understand Orthodox Jewish clients better and explain to them how keeping these laws can impact their relationship. It will also provide valuable insight to family therapists.

I believe that some may have positive experiences in keeping the law and others negative. By understanding what it is people do go through will allow therapists to understand them accordingly.

If you do think the interview may have raised concerns for yourself then please contact your GP. If you are feeling like you need to speak to someone you can also contact the Jewish Helpline on 0800 652 9249.

Additionally, if there is a question you would like to raise with me, please do not hesitate to contact me and if I am unable to help you I can put you in contact with someone who can. We hope you found the study interesting. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at the following:



Ethics approval code: PSYCH (P/F) 14/15 170

Appendix F: City University Psychology Department Standard Ethics Application Approval



Psychology Research Ethics Committee
School of Social Sciences
City University London
London EC1R 0JD

28th May 2015

Dear Chantal Schapira

Reference: PSYCH (P/F) 14/15 170

Project title: "The male view on Jewish Laws of Family Purity and their impact on marital satisfaction"

I am writing to confirm that the research proposal detailed above has been granted approval by the City University London Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee.

Period of approval

Approval is valid for a period of three years from the date of this letter. If data collection runs beyond this period you will need to apply for an extension using the Amendments Form.

Project amendments

You will also need to submit an Amendments Form if you want to make any of the following changes to your research:

- (a) Recruit a new category of participants
- (b) Change, or add to, the research method employed
- (c) Collect additional types of data
- (d) Change the researchers involved in the project

Adverse events

You will need to submit an Adverse Events Form, copied to the Secretary of the Senate Research Ethics Committee [REDACTED] in the event of any of the following:

- (a) Adverse events
- (b) Breaches of confidentiality
- (c) Safeguarding issues relating to children and vulnerable adults
- (d) Incidents that affect the personal safety of a participant or researcher

Issues (a) and (b) should be reported as soon as possible and no later than 5 days after the event. Issues (c) and (d) should be reported immediately. Where appropriate the researcher should also report adverse events to other relevant institutions such as the police or social services.

Should you have any further queries then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]
Departmental Administrator

[REDACTED]
Chair

Appendix G: Analysis Stage 1 Example: Initial Noting on Transcript

transcript 2
stage 1+2

1

1 TS-SG

2 R1 So what motivated you to take part in the study?

3 P1 I saw it advertised and when I saw the topic it was of interest to me
4 because it's something that is generally not spoken about um that much
5 amongst the community, even amongst good friends, so I felt like it was a
6 good platform to.. to talk freely about something like this.

7 R1 Hm, hm. Um so it's not spoken often in the community..

8 P1 No.

9 R1 Or to friends.

10 P1 The laws are very well known amongst the community but your reactions to
11 the laws and how you feel about the laws are not spoken about amongst
12 the community I don't think at all if at.. maybe.

13 R1 OK and how.. how.. how do you feel about that?

14 P1 I think it's fine that it's quite a private thing and I think it doesn't have to
15 but I think that it's something that could be spoken about for the benefit of
16 some people um who are maybe like new to marriage or um maybe
17 struggling to keep some of them in certain hard situations and becau.. I
18 think it's good to talk about these type of things and it shouldn't be so
19 secretive so I think the fact that this is an opportunity to talk about it is a
20 good thing.

21 R1 And that's why you decided?

22 P1 And that's why I decided to do it, exactly.

23 R1 OK and how is it for you keeping the family purity laws, what's been your
24 experience of it so far?

25 P1 Um I think it's been fine because I don't.. I don't really know any different
26 but from what I think, from my experience so far, I think it's like a very
27 predictable way of living and quite samey um..

28 R1 What, sorry?

29 P1 Like samey, like predictab.. I.. I can't think of another word I'm trying to say
30 but it's very rigid.

31 R1 OK.

32 P1 I think is the word I'm searching for, it's quite rigid. It's sometimes really
33 like nice and obviously there have been like nice things within it like having,
34 you know, coming back together and things like that um but I.. for.. for me I
35 think it's the.. the time where you can't really touch and the times that you
36 can't really be together and you're told not to I think sometimes that does

unspeaken in community

*private experience
desire to speak
more openly*

*feelings about
laws not spoken
about*

*private but
should talk
more about it*

*predictable way
of living*

*don't know
any different
predictable way
of living*

*very
rigid*

*the net
touching
can outweigh
the
of touching*

negatives outweigh positives

- 37 outweigh like the like 10 to 2 weeks of the month that you get to finally like
 38 do touch and sometimes that does hang.. hang over it a bit.

39 R1 OK so what.. I mean something that stuck out to me is that it was a
 40 predictable way of living.

41 P1 Yeah.

42 R1 Will you tell me more about that?

43 P1 Bec.. I think it's because it's a way of living because I'm anyway a very
 44 regular cycled person plus the pill which is extremely regular, those two
 45 things combined and I've pretty much been on the pill or having a regular
 46 cycle for my entire marriage means for me it's literally two weeks on, two
 47 weeks off, two weeks on, two off for my entire marriage, there's never
 48 been like yeah I can like double over pills and things like that and that's
 49 been really nice but I don't really want to live on a pill my whole life as well.
 50 So I feel like that's how.. I feel like it's quite predictable because I.. I literally
 51 know a month, whole month before, when I'm next going to the mikveh.

52 R1 Hm and what's your feelings about that predicta.. predictability?

ability to plan - 53

doesn't always fit into schedule 54-57
ridiculous not touch to want to touch when want 58-62

nice that spontaneity is removed 69-72

annoying knowing when sex will happen 76-79
excitement removed when it's scheduled 79-80

53 P1 I think it's useful because it means you can like plan certain things.. nights
 54 and plan certain things and you can like know what you're going to be up to
 55 and like fit it in kind of with your schedule but at the same time there are
 56 some things that you've got to do which you're busy.. you're too.. you
 57 know, you're busy, you know someone's away, you know there's a big deal
 58 on at work, you know there's something going on, you know you're on half
 59 term but it doesn't fit and then everything's a bit like you'll XXX (03:41) a bit
 60 like that's so ridiculous in advance and then you're annoyed for that whole
 61 month that you know that in two weeks you are going to not be able to
 62 touch in that time that you're free. So for me, I think because of the way
 63 it's so structured for.. for my personal marriage and the way that my life is
 64 really structured in terms of my routines and I'm quite a routines person
 65 you'd think that routines would work with me and potentially it does
 66 because I don't know any different, potentially if I didn't have a regular
 67 cycle and if I didn't have a regular pill intake maybe I would dislike it even
 68 more because it's so unpredictable and so annoying but sometimes I
 69 wonder if maybe I wouldn't and it's quite nice to have a bit of spontaneity
 70 within your life in terms of that aspect of your life because it is something
 71 that should be spontaneous and from an instinct and that's partially
 72 removed when you have got a structure.

- able to plan around the law
- something doesn't fit in
- ridiculous + annoying to touch for 2 weeks

- missing the spontaneity
- what removed for structured

73 R1 Hm so will you tell me a little bit more about the spontaneous thing that
 74 you would.. you would rather have that you're not getting or..

75 P1 I feel like because life is so busy, everything anyway nowadays is very
 76 scheduled I feel in life for everyone so it's.. you can't escape the fact that
 77 when you know that that evening you are going to, you know, have sexual
 78 relations like as a fact and whilst that's a fine fact just knowing that you
 79 definitely are is sometimes annoying because it takes away like the.. maybe
 80 the process before or like the.. just the excitement which may anyway not

- sexual relations becomes fact line + takes away excitement as sexual relations is scheduled

hard excitement is removed

pregnancy was nice + free

manages life even more busy

shouldn't be this way

forced to do it

rush to mikveh

not my envision

annoying cant touch when want to

81 really exist in reality I'm not sure because I don't know any different but I'm
 82 pretty sure it should or does and it's very hard to like not have that option.
 83 In fact when I was pregnant is the only time and then I was pregnant so
 84 pregnancy was the only time that I felt what it was like and it was kind of
 85 really free and nice but at the same time I was pregnant so I was pregnant
 86 and it's like you're very tired and you've got all other factors going on so I
 87 think for people who live a housewife kind of lifestyle I don't find this would
 88 be a big deal I don't think, at all because you're not that tired, there's not
 89 much going on, you know, you make an effort, those two weeks, great, but
 90 if you're someone who's extremely busy like it's just it fits in like everything
 91 else which is maybe bad on my part but that's what it's like.

R1 Yeah, so you said it's bad on your part?

P1 Yeah um maybe because I think sometimes I wonder or I contemplate like
 93 should this be it, I don't think it should be, what can I do then I just don't fix
 94 it, I don't think about it, we can discuss it, we both kind of agree and then
 95 we're like but what can we do and like it's not.

R1 When.. when you say this should be it, what do you mean this should be it?

P1 Like.

R1 How would you describe it?

P1 Rushing off to the mekveh before it closes quick.

R1 OK.

P1 Get back um like all flustered, Jessie's crying, like baby's crying and then all
 103 of a sudden you're just like.. like it's fine it's just not like what you'd
 104 envision.

R1 Yeah.

P1 For your sexual lives and then typically when you're actually in the.. the
 106 niddah part where you can't touch obviously that's the time where your
 107 baby's sleeping, you're on half term, you've got nothing going on.

R1 Yeah.

P1 And that's just annoying. It's just the way it is.

R1 Yeah and you mentioned before about this thing where you know that
 112 you're definitely going to have sexual relations.

P1 Yeah.

R1 Is that, you mean the.. the night that you go to the..

P1 Yeah.

R1 Mikveh.

3
hard not to have excitement

pregnancy no rules + felt nice + free

due to busy schedule it becomes "schedule"

contemplate if it should be this why agreement in relationship - cant do anything about it

rushing to mikveh

flustered for baby crying

not what you envision for your sexual lives

cant touch like seems to be more relaxed so its annoying

117 P1 Yeah.

118 R1 So do you want to tell me a bit about that experience?

119 P1 Um it's like fine especially, let's see, now that.. I don't mind it now that the
 120 mikveh's much earlier in the winter time. In the summer time I'm really,
 121 really, really, really tired and I come back at like sometimes like 10.30pm
 122 and I'm just so tired so again it just takes away from like the energy and the
 123 fun of it because you've already had your whole evening sitting on the
 124 couch, you know, not touching and then you go out and then you come
 125 back and now you can touch all of a sudden and it's a bit like well, that's not
 126 really.. that's not really foreplay like that's not anything, that's just like
 127 you're really tired, you've got to go to bed but like obviously you want to
 128 but at the same time you're just so already like out of it and you have work
 129 the next day so, I don't know. That's what I mean by that, in the winter it's
 130 fine because like you come home at like 6.00pm and like it's all good
 131 because you've got a whole evening ahead of you to have a normal evening
 132 and have a nice time. So I think it's about.. I think that shows that it's about
 133 time and it's about putting like not.. it.. it's about making it quite a natural
 134 thing I think because, well clearly for me, making it natural means it's all
 135 nice and you need time for that otherwise it's forced because forcedness
 136 comes when you have no time and then it becomes a bit more like
 137 regimented and like let's kick.. let's tick this off as opposed to like let's just
 138 enjoy our evening and have a nice time with each other for once.

139 R1 Hm so it's back to it being a predictable way of living?

140 P1 Yeah.

141 R1 Yeah.

142 P1 And I'm such a schedule person so for me it's even more than average.. I
 143 would say it's probably more than the average person because I'm such a
 144 schedule person.

145 R1 Hm so then how do you deal with this?

146 P1 I don't know, actually like it's just, it's.. this is what I'm used to and this is
 147 what it is and it's fine. It kind of like eases off after the actual mikveh night.
 148 You get into your new schedule rhythm of just like having a nice time
 149 together again.

150 R1 Yeah.

151 P1 So it eases off but then as it's kind of become like the best it could be, like
 152 comfortable and really lovely again it's pretty much like you've got like one
 153 weekend left and let's say you're really busy and you're out that Friday
 154 night or you're.. then it kind of like it's gone again and it's already you're
 155 back into niddah again.

156 R1 Yeah.

157 P1 It's very short, the period of time, I find.

mikveh fine in winter

mikveh late times away from

mikveh not foreplay

need time to unwind after mikveh

mikveh can cause forced sexual relations

want more time to enjoy

after mikveh night its nice

once comfortable you become niddah again

short periods of time

winter dont mind mikveh

summer its later not foreplay to go more tired mikveh

worn next day

winter time to relax or the evening fine makes it natural

without time its forced can become regimented

after the mikveh high the "schedule" or "planned" time eases off

eases off then becomes comfortable again niddah comes along quickly

Appendix H: Analysis Stage 2 Example: Developing Emerging Themes

Transcript 2

Themes	Line Numbers
due to privacy there is lack of support in the community C	10 -12, 14-20, 813-814
Lonely experience C	14-20,
no spontaneity in this way of living C	25-27, 29-30,32, 43-51, 69-72, 75-80, 135-137
expected more excitement from marriage C	25-27, 29-30,32, 43-51, 69-72, 75-80, 135-137, 208-212
are general positive aspects to niddah L	33-34
negatives of keeping laws outweigh positives	32-38
frustrating I am not able to plan when I am impure	53-72,106-110
anticipation of niddah is frustrating as I am knowing I cant touch my husband	58-62
inability to instinctly touch	69-72, 106-110
hard not knowing any other way of living life	81-82
time schedule of niddah makes me feel trapped	83-91
pressurised to make an effort for two weeks of purity	88-91, 484-491
guilty about scheduling sex	89-91
not how I expected my relationship to be	93-96, 100-104, 208-212
niddah dictates our relationship as it states when we can have sex	96-96
being impure at inconvenient times creating frustration	106-110
mikvah in winter is manageable as I can go to mikvah earlier	119-120, 129-138
mikvah falls late in summer I feel forced to have intimate relations even though I am tired	135-138
dislike going from not touching to having sex	135-138, 160-165
after mikvah night being together gets easier	146-149
constantly dreading being niddah again as I know I can't touch my husband	146-149
the period of touching is too short to get used to	157, 160-170, 176-177
niddah feels abnormal as it doesn't fit with my natural way of being	169-170
desire to touch for longer periods of time	165-170
forced to have an unwanted break from my husband	175-177
unable to see the benefit of the law	172-175
constantly missing my husband	172-174
there is not enough time to really relax and enjoy purity	182-189
niddah is an imposition on my marriage	192-193
to enjoy niddah you need time that I don't have to invest	195-199, 210-212
niddah is not ideal for me	201-206
I find niddah more difficult than my husband does	215-225
niddah requires respect for each other	221-225
guilty husband needs to accept my feelings towards sex as he can't have it that often	221-225
spouses need to be sensitive to one anothers emotions	215-219, 469-473
very sad when can't touch during difficult life periods	228-232, 413-419
frustrated I can't touch rather than frustration about sex	237-247, 413-419
strenuous for our relationship when can't touch in difficult times	228-247
question the reason behind the laws during difficult times	245-247

disappointed I'm unable to see positives of the law	249, 448
when niddah I feel emotionally distant from my husband	261-268, 400-404
during impure times I don't feel like im in a marriage as I can't touch	261-268, 400-404, 427-430
during impurity its difficult to feel close to my husband	262-268, 274, 276-284
my husband finds it hard to reach out to me verbally	276-284
communicating with her husband without touch is difficult	276-284
deisre to improve relationship with husband	276-278
feels close to husband when able to communicate verbally	290-302
during times we can be physical I feel like there's no space for my emotional side	290-302
difficult for relationship they have different ways of communicating - she is verbal her husband is physical	287-302
touching after being impure is not as nice as I thought it would be	298-302
not being able to touch results in a lot of miscommunication	298-302, 312-322
changing from one stage to another is exhausting as you need to think about it deeply	304-310
constantly feel trapped as always told what to do through the laws	318-322
feels very unnatural not to touch her husband	330-334, 501-519, 641-654
being niddah consumes her mind as shes always thinking about it	331-334
enjoy having a guiltless break from having intimate relations	339-344,368-370
feels bad about wanting a break from her husband	246-341
being impure feels lonely	360-364, 411-419
the cycles repetitiveness takes away from excitement	368-382
expected it to be more exciting	372-382, 385-391
expected desire for reconnection to be more exciting	379-382
frustrating there is no element of surprise as niddah dictates our touch	385-391
ridiculous intimate relations are scheduled	385-391
rediculous she cant touch at all - not about sex	395-398
not special relationship if can't touch husband	400-405
doesn't feel united with her husband if they can't touch	400-409
not being able to touch can enahnce stressful situations	411-419,423-426, 465-466
ability to appreciate husband more if I could always touch him	411-419
niddah takes away the safe space of talking to her husband	434-444
being unable to touch makes it even harder to communicate	434-444
the end of niddah creates a lot of tension in her relationship	440-444, 473-475, 477-481
niddah feels very overwhelming at such a young age as it's a lot to take on	450-462
niddah felt like another discipline within her life	450-454
she feels more sensitive to her husband when she cant touch him	469-473
keeping the laws creates a constant strain as both cycles are hard	484-491
unable to see the benefit of the law	493
her and her husband are sensitive to different aspects creating tension	508-514
she feels lonely when she's in niddah	506-514
mikvah is therepeutic and cleansing	523-527, 580-581
I have learnt to appreciate and enjoy mikvah over the years	523-537
mikvah creates an opportunity to pray	539-544, 551-552

mikvah feels enjoyable and natural	537-548
motivation to have a positive outlook about the laws	580-582
positive outlook of mikvah creates a positive experience	574-579, 673-674
mikvah creates cleansing and therapeutic experience	579-582
hope keeping rules improves with time	579-582, 706-708
mikvah is very time constraining as it takes up a whole evening and takes precedent of anything else going on	585-586
enjoy my husbands excitement for me when I come home	597-607
appreciate I am forced to be intimate with my husband	613-628
difficult to go from not touching to touch	657-670
personal growth to work on physical relationship	665-670
as relationship gets better the laws get easier	673-678
not touching I feel I lose out opportunity to enhance relationship	689-682
difficulty understanding reasons behind the laws	696-699, 761-762
belief but blinded to the beauty of the laws	703-706
only keep the laws because I am forced to	703-704
laws can be overwhelmingly difficult	721-733
overwhelmed with guilt when transgress the laws	737-745
angry the laws create feelings of guilt	745-751
extremely difficult when can't touch for an extended time	757-766
lack of empathy in everyone around me regarding the difficulty of the laws	764-773
keeping the laws has improved with time	775-783
yearning for physical comfort from my husband	783-786
mikvah is about rejuvenation and rebirth	790-791
mikvah special when trying to get pregnant	803-805
desire for people to speak more openly about the laws	813-815, 821-824
desire for communal support	819-822

Appendix I: Analysis Stage 3 Example: Identifying Common Themes

Stage 3

1. *privacy creates feelings of loneliness*

due to privacy there is lack of support in the community C	10 -12, 14-20, 813-814
Lonely experience C	14-20,
desire for people to speak more openly about the laws	813-815, 821-824
desire for communal support	819-822

2. *living by rules of when and when can't touch doesn't allow me to act spontaneously with my husband taking away excitement*

no spontaneity in this way of living C	25-27, 29-30,32, 43-51, 69-72, 75-80, 135-137
frustrating I am not able to plan when I am impure	53-72,106-110
inability to instinctly touch	69-72, 106-110
niddah dictates our relationship as it states when we can have sex	96-96
ridiculous intimate relations are scheduled	385-391
frustrating there is no element of surprise as niddah dictates our touch	385-391
the cycles repetitiveness takes away from excitement	368-382

3. *not being allowed to touch when we want creates feelings of being trapped*

anticipation of niddah is frustrating as I am knowing I cant touch my husband	58-62
time schedule of niddah makes me feel trapped	83-91
being impure at inconvenient times creating frustration	106-110
forced to have an unwanted break from my husband	175-177
strenuous for our relationship when can't touch in difficult times	228-247
niddah felt like another discipline within her life	450-454

4. *unlived expectations of marriage is disapointing*

expected more excitement from marriage C	25-27, 29-30,32, 43-51, 69-72, 75-80, 135-137, 208-212
not how I expected my relationship to be	93-96, 100-104, 208-212
touching after being impure is not as nice as I thought it would be	298-302
expected it to be more exciting	372-382, 385-391
expected desire for reconnection to be more exciting	379-382

5. *consequence of being 'impure' feels lonely and misunderstood*

contantly dreading being niddah again as I know I can't touch my husband	146-149
forced to have an unwanted break from my husband	175-177
contantly missing my husband	172-174
frustrated I can't touch rather than frustration about sex	237-247, 413-419
when niddah I feel emotionaly distant from my husband	261-268, 400-404
not being able to touch results in a lot of miscommunication	298-302, 312-322
being impure feels lonely	360-364, 411-419

6. pressurised to only be physical with husband

pressurised to make an effort for two weeks of purity 88-91, 484-491

mikvah falls late in summer I feel forced to have intimate relations even though I am tired 135-138

during times we can be physical I feel like there's no space for my emotional side 290-302

7. pressurised by time

to enjoy niddah you need time that I don't have to invest 195-199, 210-212

8. not being able to touch creates sadness and frustration

desire to touch for longer periods of time but not allowed 165-170

very sad when can't touch during difficult life periods 228-232, 413-419

communicating with her husband without touch is difficult 276-284

feels very unnatural not to touch her husband 330-334, 501-519, 641-654

ridiculous she cant touch at all - not about sex 395-398

not special relationship if can't touch husband 400-405

not touching I feel I lose out opportunity to enhance relationship 689-682

9. no space to deal with my current needs

desire to touch for longer periods of time but not allowed 165-170

being niddah consumes her mind as shes always thinking about it 331-334

10. impact of forced verbal communication

my husband finds it hard to reach out to me verbally which makes things difficult when we can't touch 276-284

feels close to husband when able to communicate verbally 290-302

11. feelings of being trapped by laws

the period of touching is too short to get used to 157, 160-170, 176-177

niddah feels abnormal as it doesn't fit with my natural way of being 169-170

very sad when can't touch during difficult life periods 228-232, 413-419

frustrating there is no element of surprise as niddah dictates our touch 385-391

niddah takes away the safe space of talking to her husband 434-444

keeping the laws creates a constant strain as both cycles are hard 484-491

only keep the laws because I am forced to 703-704

12. not always being able to touch creates conflict within the relationship

negatives of keeping laws outweigh positives 32-38

dislike going from not touching to having sex 135-138, 160-165

not special relationship if can't touch husband 400-405

doesn't feel united with her husband if they can't touch 400-409

not being able to touch can enhance stressful situations 411-419, 423-426, 465-466

ability to appreciate husband more if I could always touch him 411-419

niddah takes away the safe space of talking to her husband	434-444
being unable to touch makes it even harder to communicate	434-444
she feels more sensitive to her husband when she cant touch him	469-473
she feels lonely when she's in niddah	506-514
extremely difficult when can't touch for an extended time	757-766
yearning for physical comfort from my husband	783-786
13. impact of sticking to rules when so young	
niddah feels very overwhelming at such a young age as it's a lot to take on	450-462
14. law causes feelings of frustration and conflict	
unable to see the benefit of the law	172-175
niddah is not ideal for me	201-206
question the reason behind the laws during difficult times	245-247
disappointed I'm unable to see positives of the law	249, 448
constantly feel trapped as always told what to do through the laws	318-322
unable to see the benefit of the law	493
mikvah is very time constraining as it takes up a whole evening and takes precedent of anything else going on	585-586
difficulty understanding reasons behind the laws	696-699, 761-762
belief but blinded to the beauty of the laws	703-706
laws can be overwhelmingly difficult	721-733
angry the laws create feelings of guilt	745-751
15. niddah creates a negtive impact on my relationship	
niddah is an imposition on my marriage	192-193
when niddah I feel emotionaly distant from my husband	261-268, 400-404
during impure times I don't feel like im in a marriage as I can't touch	261-268, 400-404, 427-430
during impurity its difficult to feel close to my husband	262-268, 274, 276-284
the end of niddah creates a lot of tension in her relationship	440-444, 473-475, 477-481
she feels more sensitive to her husband when she cant touch him	469-473
16. impact of mikvah	
mikvah in winter is manageable as I can go to mikvah earlier	119-120, 129-138
mikvah is very time constraining as it takes up a whole evening and takes precedent of anything else going on	585-586
17. mikvah creates spiritual feelings	
mikvah is therepeutic and cleansing	523-527, 580-581
mikvah creates an opportunity to pray	539-544, 551-552
mikvah feels enjoyable and natural	537-548
mikvah creates cleansing and therpeutic experience	579-582
mikvah is about rejuvination and rebirth	790-791

mikvah special when trying to get pregnant	803-805
I have learnt to appreciate and enjoy mikvah over the years	523-537
18. difficult feelings that emerge due to quick transitioning of stages (touching to not touching)	
dislike going from not touching to having sex	135-138, 160-165
constantly dreading being niddah again as I know I can't touch my husband	146-149
there is not enough time to really relax and enjoy purity	182-189
changing from one stage to another is exhausting as you need to think about it deeply	304-310
difficult to go from not touching to touch	657-670
after mikvah night being together gets easier	146-149
19. creates tension in relationship	
I find niddah more difficult than my husband does	215-225
difficult for relationship they have different ways of communicating - she is verbal her husband is physical	287-302
her and her husband are sensitive to different aspects creating tension	508-514
20. hope for the future	
desire to improve relationship with husband	276-278
hope keeping rules improves with time	579-582, 706-708
keeping the laws has improved with time	775-783
21. appreciative of forced physical relationship	
appreciate I am forced to be intimate with my husband	613-628
22. feel appreciated by husband	
enjoy my husband's excitement for me when I come home	597-607
23. feelings of guilt created	
guilty about scheduling sex	89-91
guilty husband needs to accept my feelings towards sex as he can't have it that often	221-225
feels bad about wanting a break from her husband	246-341
overwhelmed with guilt when transgress the laws	737-745
24. positive outlook on the laws	
are general positive aspects to niddah L	33-34
motivation to have a positive outlook about the laws	580-582
positive outlook of mikvah creates a positive experience	574-579, 673-674
25. positivity of not having guilt for not being physical	
enjoy having a guiltless break from having intimate relations	339-344, 368-370

26. level of easiness of keeping rules depends on relationship

as relationship gets better the laws get easier	673-678
niddah requires respect for each other	221-225
spouses need to be sensitive to one anothers emotions	215-219, 469-473

27. desire for more empathy about rule keeping

lack of empathy in everyone around me regarding the difficulty of the laws	764-773
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Appendix J: Analysis Stage 4 Example: Clustering per single participant

STAGE 4

keeping the rule creates loneliness

1. privacy creates feelings of loneliness

due to privacy there is lack of support in the community C	10 -12, 14-20, 813-814
Lonely experience C	14-20,
desire for people to speak more openly about the laws	813-815, 821-824
desire for communal support	819-822

5. consequence of being 'impure' feels lonely and misunderstood

constantly dreading being niddah again as I know I can't touch my husband	146-149
forced to have an unwanted break from my husband	175-177
constantly missing my husband	172-174
frustrated I can't touch rather than frustration about sex	237-247, 413-419
when niddah I feel emotionally distant from my husband	261-268, 400-404
not being able to touch results in a lot of miscommunication	298-302, 312-322
being impure feels lonely	360-364, 411-419

27. desire for more empathy about rule keeping

lack of empathy in everyone around me regarding the difficulty of the laws	764-773
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Difficulty on the self created due to time constraints

7. pressurised by time

to enjoy niddah you need time that I don't have to invest	195-199, 210-212
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9. no space to deal with my current needs

desire to touch for longer periods of time but not allowed	165-170
being niddah consumes her mind as shes always thinking about it	331-334

16. impact of mikvah

mikvah in winter is manageable as I can go to mikvah earlier	119-120, 129-138
mikvah is very time constraining as it takes up a whole evening and takes precedent of anything else going on	585-586

18. difficult feelings that emerge due to quick transitioning of stages (touching to not touching)

dislike going from not touching to having sex	135-138, 160-165
constantly dreading being niddah again as I know I can't touch my husband	146-149
there is not enough time to really relax and enjoy purity	182-189
changing from one stage to another is exhausting as you need to think about it deeply	304-310
difficult to go from not touching to touch	657-670

after mikvah night being together gets easier 146-149

feelings of guilt created due to keeping the rules

23. feelings of guilt created

guilty about scheduling sex 89-91
guilty husband needs to accept my feelings towards sex as he can't have it that often 221-225
feels bad about wanting a break from her husband 246-341
overwhelmed with guilt when transgress the laws 737-745

relationship conflict that occurs as a result of the rules

10. impact of forced verbal communication

my husband finds it hard to reach out to me verbally which makes things difficult when we can't touch 276-284
feels close to husband when able to communicate verbally 290-302

12. not always being able to touch creates conflict within the relationship

negatives of keeping laws outweigh positives 32-38
dislike going from not touching to having sex 135-138, 160-165
not special relationship if can't touch husband 400-405
doesn't feel united with her husband if they can't touch 400-409
not being able to touch can enhance stressful situations 411-419, 423-426, 465-466
ability to appreciate husband more if I could always touch him 411-419
niddah takes away the safe space of talking to her husband 434-444
being unable to touch makes it even harder to communicate 434-444
she feels more sensitive to her husband when she can't touch him 469-473
she feels lonely when she's in niddah 506-514
extremely difficult when can't touch for an extended time 757-766
yearning for physical comfort from my husband 783-786

15. niddah creates a negative impact on my relationship

niddah is an imposition on my marriage 192-193
when niddah I feel emotionally distant from my husband 261-268, 400-404
during impure times I don't feel like im in a marriage as I can't touch 261-268, 400-404, 427-430
during impurity its difficult to feel close to my husband 262-268, 274, 276-284
the end of niddah creates a lot of tension in her relationship 440-444, 473-475, 477-481
she feels more sensitive to her husband when she can't touch him 469-473

19. creates tension in relationship

I find niddah more difficult than my husband does 215-225
difficult for relationship they have different ways of communicating - she is verbal her husband is physical 287-302
her and her husband are sensitive to different aspects creating tension 508-514

positive outlook for future

20. hope for the future

deisre to improve relationship with husband	276-278
hope keeping rules improves with time	579-582, 706-708
keeping the laws has improved with time	775-783
24. positive outlook on the laws	
are general positive aspects to niddah L	33-34
motivation to have a positive outlook about the laws	580-582
positive outlook of mikvah creates a positive experience	574-579, 673-674

feelings towards rules are dependant on many things

13. impact of sticking to rules when so young

niddah feels very overwhelming at such a young age as it's a lot to take on	450-462
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26. level of easiness of keeping rules depends on relationship

as relationship gets better the laws get easier	673-678
niddah requires respect for each other	221-225
spouses need to be sensitive to one anothers emotions	215-219, 469-473

dissapointment creatd in keeping the rules

4. unlived expectations of marriage is disapointing

expected more excitement from marriage C	25-27, 29-30,32, 43-51, 69-72, 75-80, 135-137, 208-212
not how I expected my relationship to be	93-96, 100-104, 208-212
touching after being impure is not as nice as I thought it would be	298-302
expected it to be more exciting	372-382, 385-391
expected desire for reconnection to be more exciting	379-382

rules takes away excitement of touch

2. living by rules of when and when can't touch doesn't allow me to act sponteneously with my husband taking away excitement

no sponteanity in this way of living C	25-27, 29-30,32, 43-51, 69-72, 75-80, 135-137
frustrating I am not able to plan when I am impure	53-72,106-110
inabilty to instinctly touch	69-72, 106-110
niddah dictates our relationship as it states when we can have sex	96-96
ridiculous intimate relations are scheduled	385-391
frustrating there is no element of surprise as niddah dictates our touch	385-391
the cycles repetitiveness takes away from excitement	368-382

pressure

6. pressurised to only be physical with husband

pressurised to make an effort for two weeks of purity	88-91, 484-491
mikvah falls late in summer I feel forced to have intimate relations even though I am tired	135-138
during times we can be physical I feel like there's no space for my emotional side	290-302

keeping the law causes frustration

8. not being able to touch creates sadness and frustration and difficult feelings

desire to touch for longer periods of time but not allowed	165-170
very sad when can't touch during difficult life periods	228-232, 413-419
communicating with her husband without touch is difficult	276-284
feels very unnatural not to touch her husband	330-334, 501-519, 641-654
ridiculous she can't touch at all - not about sex	395-398
not special relationship if can't touch husband	400-405
not touching I feel I lose out opportunity to enhance relationship	689-682

14. law causes feelings of frustration and conflict

unable to see the benefit of the law	172-175
niddah is not ideal for me	201-206
question the reason behind the laws during difficult times	245-247
disappointed I'm unable to see positives of the law	249, 448
constantly feel trapped as always told what to do through the laws	318-322
unable to see the benefit of the law	493
mikvah is very time consuming as it takes up a whole evening and takes precedent of anything else going on	585-586
difficulty understanding reasons behind the laws	696-699, 761-762
belief but blinded to the beauty of the laws	703-706
laws can be overwhelmingly difficult	721-733
angry the laws create feelings of guilt	745-751

feel trapped when keeping the rules

11. feelings of being trapped by laws

the period of touching is too short to get used to	157, 160-170, 176-177
niddah feels abnormal as it doesn't fit with my natural way of being	169-170
very sad when can't touch during difficult life periods	228-232, 413-419
frustrating there is no element of surprise as niddah dictates our touch	385-391
niddah takes away the safe space of talking to her husband	434-444
keeping the laws creates a constant strain as both cycles are hard	484-491
only keep the laws because I am forced to	703-704

wanting to touch but can't

3. not being allowed to touch when we want creates feelings of being trapped

anticipation of niddah is frustrating as I am knowing I can't touch my husband	58-62
time schedule of niddah makes me feel trapped	83-91
being impure at inconvenient times creating frustration	106-110
forced to have an unwanted break from my husband	175-177
stressful for our relationship when can't touch in difficult times	228-247
niddah felt like another discipline within her life	450-454

keeping rules does have positive impacts on myself

21. appreciative of forced physical relationship

appreciate I am forced to be intimate with my husband	613-628
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22. feel appreciated by husband

enjoy my husbands excitement for me when I come home 597-607

guiltless personal space

25. positivity of not having guilt for not being physical

enjoy having a guiltless break from having intimate relations 339-344,368-370

mikvah creates feelings of purity

17. mikvah creates purity

mikvah is therepeutic and cleansing 523-527, 580-581

mikvah creates an oppportunity to pray 539-544, 551-552

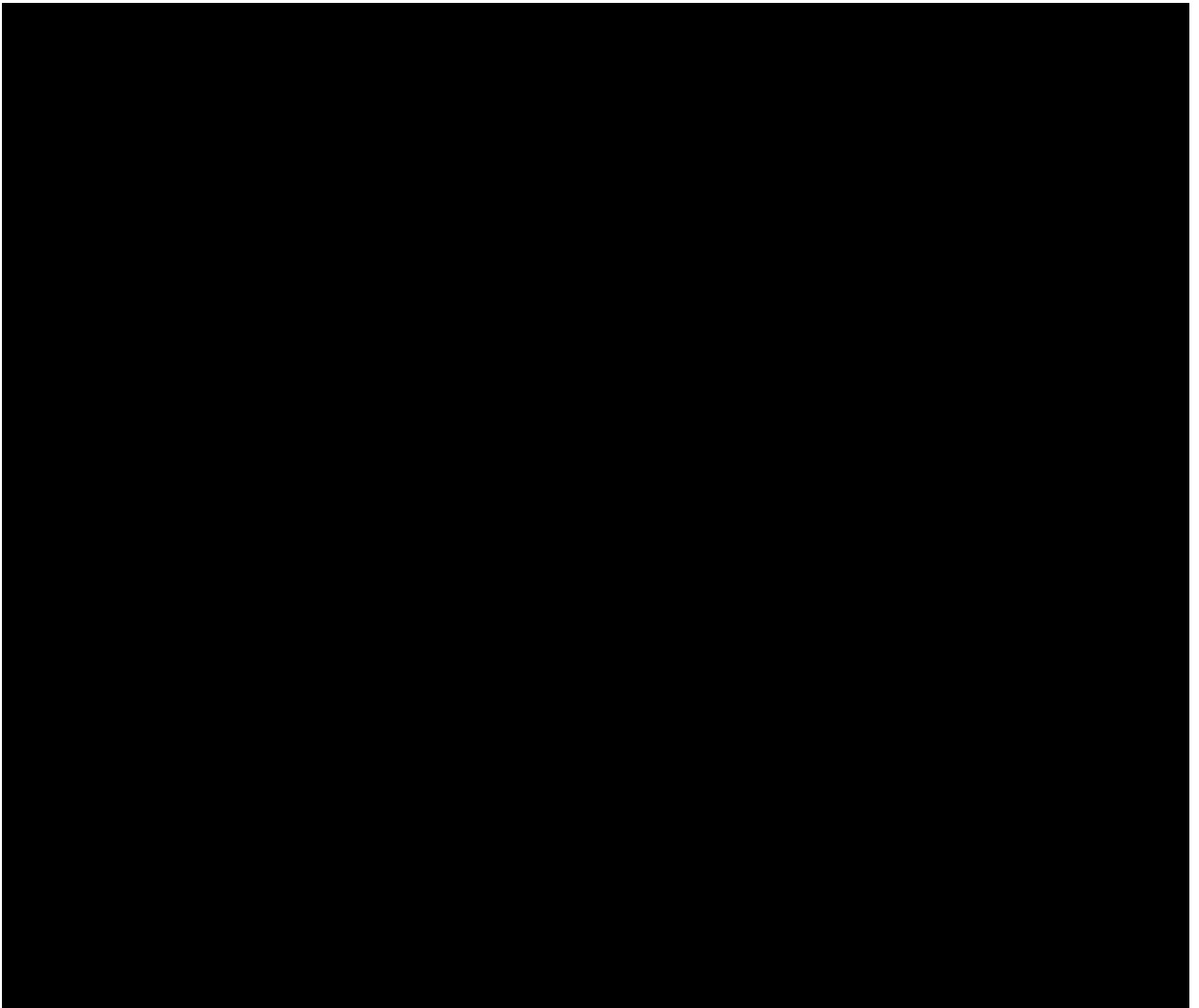
mikvah feels enjoyable and natural 537-548

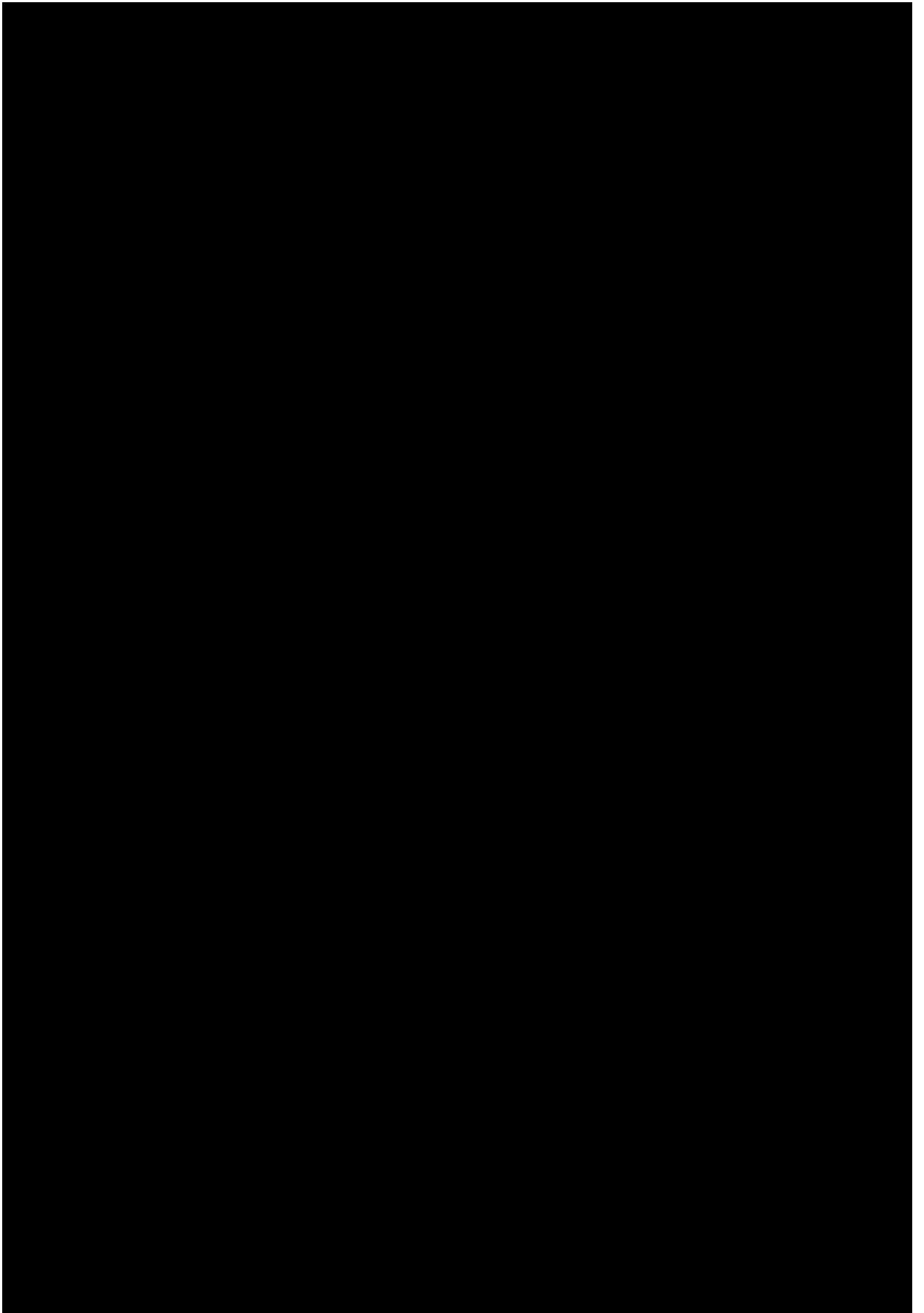
mikvah creates cleansing and therpeutic experience 579-582

mikvah is about rejuvination and rebirth 790-791

mikvah special when trying to get pregnant 803-805

I have learnt to appreciate and enjoy mikvah over the years 523-537





**Due to its sensitive nature some of
this content has been removed**

Part B: case study.

pages 172-187

Part B: Client Study



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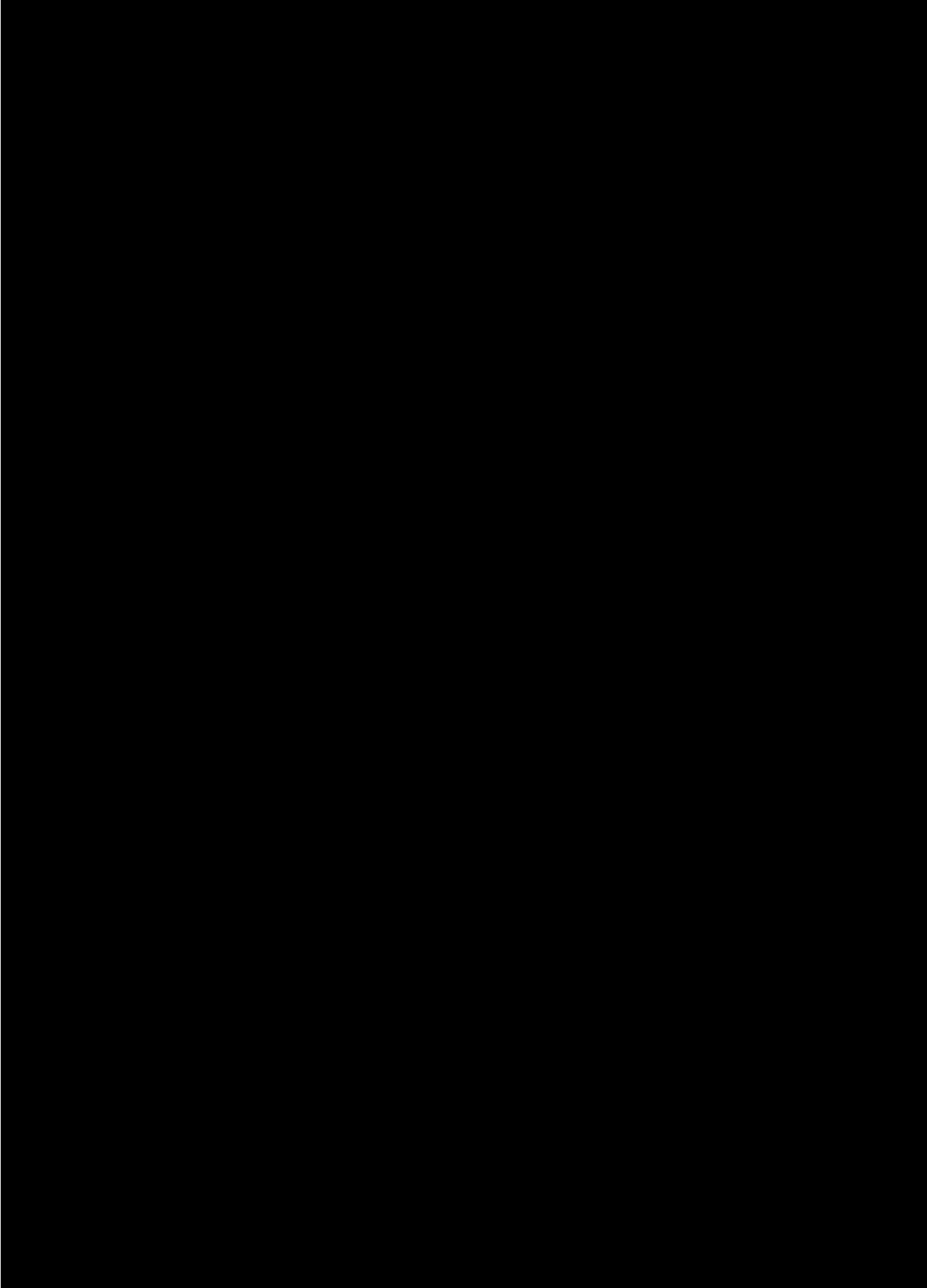
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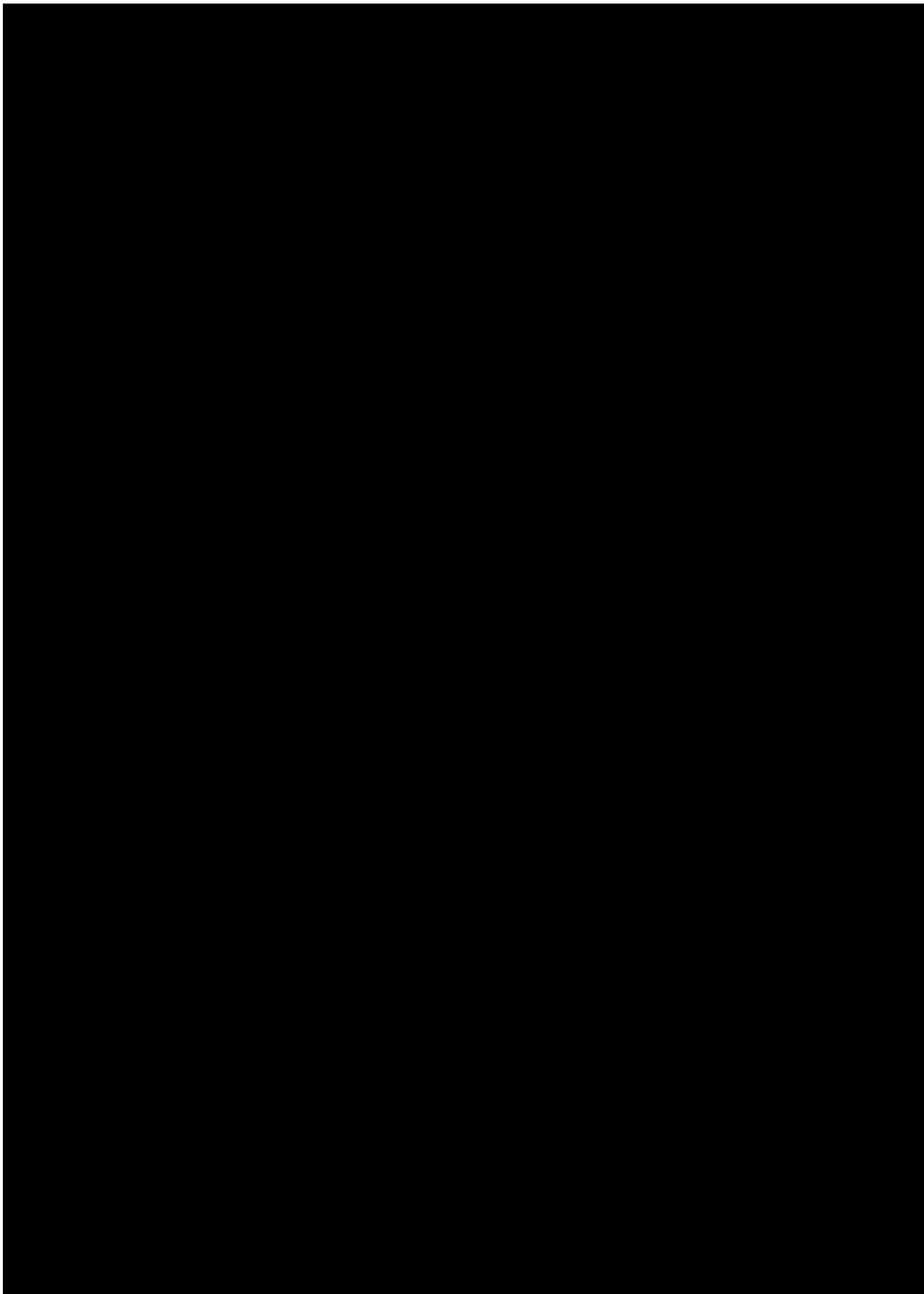
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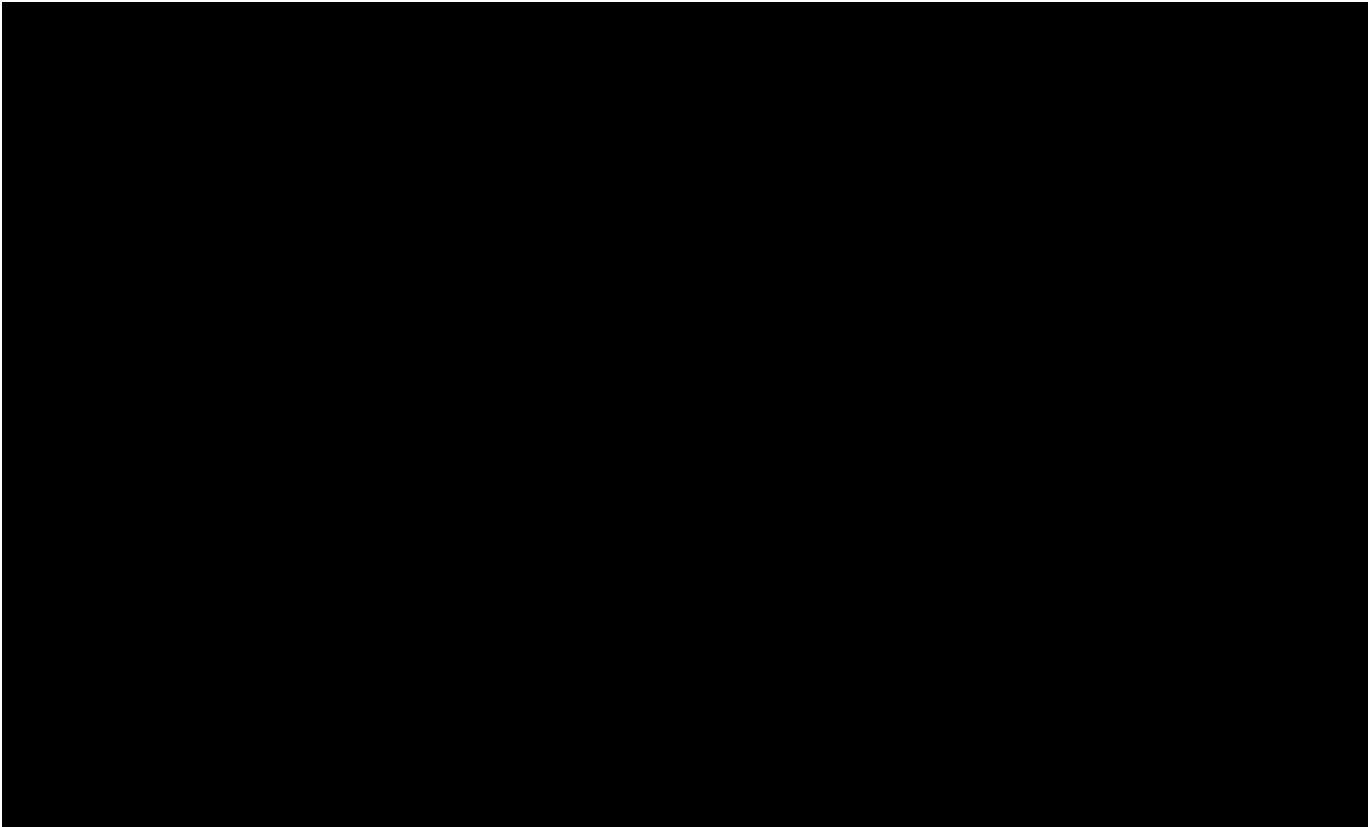
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**Part C: publishable paper.
pages 188-196**

Part C: Publishable Article

