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Effects of Religious Returnees' Observance of Family Purity Laws on Marital Satisfaction Scores

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Walden University

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Walden University
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Abstract

Effects of Religious Returnees' Observance of Family Purity Laws on Marital

Satisfaction Scores

by

Tamar Shtrambrand

MA, Hunter College, 2004

BS, Stony Brook University, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

Walden University

June 2018

Abstract

*Baal teshuv*s are traditionally observant Orthodox Jewish individuals who were previously not religiously observant and chose to become observant at a later juncture in their lives. This population is at risk of psychosocial dysfunction, particularly in the area of marriage, but little or no research has been conducted with this population. The purpose of this study was to study how 1 factor, the laws of family purity, an ancient set of Jewish laws governing sexual behavior between husbands and wives, may have an effect on marital satisfaction among *baal teshuv*s. Areas of marital satisfaction were measured by the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Triangular Love Scale, and New Sexual Satisfaction Survey. Relational-cultural theory and relational spirituality were used to describe how spirituality affects individual well-being and the quality of one's relationships with others. A sample of 44 male and 59 female *baal teshuv*s completed the surveys. MANOVAs and 2-factor ANOVAs were conducted to compare the effects of gender and level of observance of family purity laws on marital satisfaction survey results. Results indicated a significant difference only by gender on the sexual satisfaction measure, although it is not known how much of a difference there was between the genders. This study reinforces indications from past research that studying sexual satisfaction in marriages is an increasingly important area of study and clinical practice. This study may lead to positive social change by identifying methods to improve marital satisfaction in the newly religious population. In addition, the results may provide further evidence supporting the already known positive psychological benefits of the laws of family purity.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Dr. Dmitry Shtrambrand. It is also dedicated to my children, Chana Liba, Tuvia, and Yehoshua, to my parents Jacob and Pearl Sarfati, and to my in-laws, Rimma and Alex Shtrambrand.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

There is an interaction between an individual's relationship with G-d¹, couples' joint religious communication, and marital satisfaction (Prabu & Stafford, 2015). A growing and empirically-supported body of research indicates that spiritual intimacy and sanctification of marriage strengthens couples' quality of marriage and provides a buffer or protective effect for the marriage (Prabu & Stafford, 2015). In the United States, a considerable amount of research investigating the relationship between mental health and spirituality is conducted with individuals from Neoprottestant religions (Rusu & Turliuc, 2011). To understand more fully how spirituality and religion may empower and strengthen marriages across cultures and to identify the associations between mental health and spirituality among other religions and in other parts of the world, more research representing specific cultural or religious subgroups is needed (Mahoney, 2013).

The laws of family purity are an ancient set of Jewish laws governing sexual behavior between husbands and wives (Friedman, Labinsky, Rosenbaum, Schmeidler, & Yehuda, 2009). The laws revolve around the wife's menstrual cycle, where husbands and wives may not touch one another, sleep in the same bed, or engage in sexual relations from when the menstrual cycle begins to seven days after the cycle ends. Observance of these laws is taken very seriously by many Orthodox Jewish couples (Schnall, Pelcovitz, & Fox, 2013). These laws are in particular need of research attention, because they may serve as either a major stressor or protective factor in marriages. Some researchers have

¹ In Jewish tradition, there is a prohibition to speak or fully write out the different names for G-d. As a result, the word "G-d" appears throughout the text with a hyphen to replace the "o" in the middle of the word. I have presented this word in this fashion owing to reasons of religious observance.

identified psychological benefits to adherence to the laws of family purity (Berkowitz, 2008).

There is a growing sector worldwide in the Orthodox Jewish population known as *baal teshuv*s, who are individuals who grew up non-observant and became Orthodox at a later point in their lives (Cahn, 2012). Research has shown that this population is at risk of psychosocial dysfunction, with many married *baal teshuv*s in need of quality mental health care (Schnall et al., 2013). Problems with physical intimacy/sexuality and emotional satisfaction have been shown to be major areas contributing to marital discord in the *baal teshuva* population (Schnall et al., 2013). Exploring the known positive psychological benefits provided by strict adherence to the family purity laws can potentially provide benefits to marital satisfaction in the newly religious population.

This chapter begins with a summary of the research literature relevant to the topic of study. I identify the gap in the research on the study topic, offer the problem statement, and discuss the purpose of the study, research questions, and hypotheses. I then offer a detailed discussion of the major theoretical framework and relevant conceptual framework that guided this study. The research design selected for the study is discussed, including identification and explanation of key study variables, data collection methods, and strategies for analysis of the data. I next offer operational definitions of key study variables before discussing limitations of the study related to external and internal validity. Finally, I discuss the significance of the study and its potential to advance knowledge in the practice of psychology and to promote positive social change.

Background

Marital satisfaction, spirituality, and aspects of marital quality are strongly linked to one another. Family scholars argue that the interaction between religion, spirituality and marital functioning cannot be overlooked because they play an integral role in many aspects of couples' daily lives (Rauer & Volling, 2015). Research demonstrated that couples with higher levels of religiosity and spirituality tend to have lower levels of conflict and negative communication than non-religious couples (Rauer & Volling, 2015).

According to Kusner, Mahoney, Pargament, and DeMaris (2014), *sanctification*, as a construct represents a form of spiritual cognition. When couples are inspired by the perception that their marriage has divine character and significance, they are willing to demonstrate greater self-control when inevitable conflicts arise in marital situations. Religion and spirituality help couples share mutual perspectives, work together to navigate normal problems, and guide couples in sexual relations, gender roles, and self-sacrifice in marriage. Kusner et al. (2014) found that these couples show greater willingness to invest in and commit to the relationship, have access to religious and community resources that strengthen the relationship, and derive greater overall happiness and satisfaction from the relationship. Their positive behavioral choices associated with sanctification within their marriages provide a buffer effect during marital conflict (DeMaris, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2010).

Baal teshuv's choice of a spiritual and religious lifestyle demonstrates their desire to sanctify their marriage and create both personal well-being and marital

harmony. Many *baal teshuv*s are willing to abide by the laws of family purity because of strong religious conviction (Friedman et al., 2009); however, strict adherence to these laws is not necessarily universal among *baal teshuv*s (Guterman, 2008). Those *baal teshuv*s who firmly commit to adhering to the laws of family purity most likely sanctify G-d within their marriage. They also most likely demonstrate high levels of the desirable characteristics seen in previous research on the sanctification of marriage that make these marriages successful.

Family purity laws are in particular need of research attention because they may serve as either a major stressor or protective factor in marriages among the newly religious. Ratings of marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and emotional intimacy can provide important quantitative information about the health and overall quality of the marriage. This study is needed to examine these scores among the newly religious because no researchers have investigated whether strict adherence to the family purity laws among the newly religious contributes to marital harmony or adds additional stress.

Statement of the Problem

Spirituality is a central feature of the Orthodox Jewish way of life, with the laws of family purity potentially playing a powerful role in marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and overall quality of the marriage. While the mean reported overall marital satisfaction of *baal teshuv*s is not significantly lower than that of other groups (Schnall et al., 2013), it is well-known that this population is at higher risk for psychiatric disorders and psychosocial dysfunction than Orthodox non-returnees (Schnall, 2006). Problems with physical intimacy/sexuality and emotional satisfaction

often contribute to marital discord in the *baal teshuva* population (Schnall et al., 2013). There is a critical need to examine how strict adherence or lack of observance of the laws of family purity may affect marriages within the newly religious population. This is especially essential because of the higher rates of psychosocial dysfunction within this population as opposed to the general Orthodox Jewish population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the family purity laws enhanced or decreased marital satisfaction scores in *baal teshuv*as. This study employed a quantitative approach to address this gap. The independent variables included gender and level of observance of the laws of family purity. The dependent variable was rated survey scores in marital, sexual, and emotional satisfaction. I completed a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) comparing differences in subtest scores among males and females in each of the two *baal teshuva* groups for the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) subtests. The MANOVA was completed for the RDAS using the three sub-dimensional scoring groups in the emotional and marital satisfaction surveys. A significant overall *F* score on the MANOVA served to negate or confirm the null hypothesis and provide evidence supporting the overall hypothesis that there were differences in satisfaction ratings in the groups of *baal teshuv*as. The MANOVA enabled exploration of how the independent variables influenced response patterns on the dependent variables. I ran a two-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare differences in subtest scores among males and females in each of the two *baal teshuva* groups for the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale (STLS) and New Sexual Satisfaction

Survey (NSSS) scores. The two-factor ANOVA was run for the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale scores because of violations of several assumptions that ruled out MANOVA as appropriate to analyze these scores. The two-Factor ANOVA was run for NSSS scores since there was only one overall score for each participant, as opposed to several separate subtest scores. There were a total of two ANOVAs. Differences in the mean marital satisfaction scores of male and female *baal teshuvos* who observe family purity laws versus those who do not observe family purity laws on MANOVA and ANOVA tests aided in understanding whether or not the observance of the laws contributed to marital stress in *baal teshuva* marital relationships.

Research Question and Hypotheses

I developed the following research questions and hypotheses for the study:

RQ1. Based on the results of marital satisfaction surveys, are there significant mean differences on the consensus ratings on the RDAS between male and female *baal teshuvos* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀1. There will be no significant mean differences in the consensus ratings between male and female *baal teshuvos* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a1. There will be significant mean differences in the consensus ratings between male and female *baal teshuvos* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ2. Based on the results of marital satisfaction surveys, are there significant mean differences on the satisfaction ratings on the RDAS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀2. There will be no significant mean differences in the satisfaction ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a2. There will be significant mean differences in the satisfaction ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ3. Based on the results of marital satisfaction surveys, are there significant mean differences on the cohesion ratings on the RDAS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀3. There will be no significant mean differences in the cohesion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a3. There will be significant mean differences in the cohesion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ4. Based on the results of an emotional satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences in the intimacy ratings on the STLS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀₄. There will be no significant mean differences in the intimacy ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_{a4}. There will be significant mean differences in the intimacy ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ5. Based on the results of an emotional satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences on the passion ratings on the STLS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀₅. There will be no significant mean differences in the passion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_{a5}. There will be significant mean differences in the passion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ6. Based on the results of an emotional satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences on the commitment ratings on the STLS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀₆. There will be no significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_{a6}. There will be significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ7. Based on the results of a sexual satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences in the sexual satisfaction ratings on the NSSS-S between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀₇. There will be no significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_{a7}. There will be significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework for the study drew from the relational-cultural theory (RCT). RCT was originally developed in the work of psychoanalyst Jean Baker Miller (Jordan & Hartling, 2002). Miller, together with psychologists Judith Jordan, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey, explored women's development and re-examined developmental

psychology as it related to women's mental health. In their core writings, they outlined the fundamental concepts of RCT (Jordan, 2010).

According to RCT, people naturally yearn for meaningful relationships and thrive and grow when engaged in mutually growth-fostering relationships with others (Lenz, 2014). Relational disconnections are dysfunctional styles of relating. These develop when an individual yearns for connections with others where they feel happy and secure, but do not know how to create connections with others that breed secure, happy, and positive growth-oriented relationships. Relational disconnection may stem from a fear that taking the risk of being vulnerable to others may only isolate them further. From a RCT perspective, acute disconnections are not uncommon in marital relationships (Jordan, 2001). RCT takes into account forces such as power, culture, and gender that can complicate connection between married partners (Vogel, 2007).

Mahoney (2013) developed the relational spirituality framework to support and expand upon the RCT, and to explore how the human search for the sacred or divine is intertwined with the search for and development of meaningful human relationships. The literature available on couples' relational spirituality has shown that specific spiritual beliefs or behaviors appear to strengthen generally happy marriages of heterosexual couples (Mahoney & Cano, 2014a, 2014b).

Research with couples has shown a link between individual religiosity and marital satisfaction (Prabu & Stafford, 2015). *Baal teshuv*as may embrace and abide by the laws of family purity because of strong religious conviction. The relational spirituality

framework can help explain whether sanctifying G-d helps make these marriages strong and successful. Chapter 2 discusses relational spirituality and RCT in detail.

Nature of the Study

Since there is no prior quantitative research with *baal teshuv*as on this topic, this study used the independent-measures design to investigate whether there is an interaction between strict observance of the Jewish family purity laws and marital, sexual, and satisfaction scores in *baal teshuv*as. The design was appropriate because there is no prior knowledge of the population mean or population variance of the populations being studied (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013).

The independent variables included gender and identification as either *baal teshuv*as who strictly observed the family purity laws or those who did not strictly observe the laws. The dependent variables were the scores given by male and female participants and the two different types of *baal teshuv*a groups. The scores included survey scores in marital, sexual, or emotional satisfaction, and sub-dimensional scores included under marital and emotional satisfaction.

Participants were recruited from several large, well-established Orthodox Jewish communities in the northeastern section of the United States. I was granted permission from primary care offices, local medical centers, and libraries in selected communities to post advertisements when recruiting participants (see Appendix A). Chapter 3 includes more information regarding criteria for selecting participants who were included in this study.

Each included couple received a packet with copies of an informed consent form, and each of the marital, sexual, and emotional satisfaction surveys to fill out. Over time, I determined that an insufficient numbers of participants were completing mailed packet materials. I then placed the surveys online at SurveyMonkey.com for participants to fill out. The instruments, both online and mailed in, were hand scored and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 was used for data analysis.

Definitions of Term

Baal teshuvras: Jewish individuals who grew up non-observant and who by choice became religiously observant at a later point in their lives (Cahn, 2012).

Emotional intimacy: A feeling of closeness to one's partner that enables sharing one's feelings and experiencing understanding, affirmation, and acceptance within the relationship (Stulhofer, Ferreira, & Landriplet, 2014).

Marital satisfaction: A global evaluation of the marriage, including satisfaction within spheres such as the emotional, sexual, and spiritual quality of the marriage (Zhang, Ho, & Yip, 2012).

Relational-cultural theory: A theory that explains how individuals naturally yearn for meaningful relationships and thrive and grow when engaged in mutually growth-fostering relationships with others (Lenz, 2014).

Relational spirituality framework: A conceptual framework designed by Mahoney (2010) to organize empirical evidence about how the human search for the sacred or divine is intertwined with the development of meaningful human relationships.

Sanctification of marriage: The degree to which marital partners view their marriages as a reflection of their beliefs in G-d and their religious faith (Rusu, Beach, Turliuc, & Bodenmann, 2015).

Sexual satisfaction: A couples' subjective perception of the sexual relationship (Zhang et al., 2012)

Assumptions

Initial participants completed responses to the surveys in pencil and paper format. I initially used pencil and paper format, as opposed to asking participants to fill out the surveys online, because many Orthodox Jewish communities frown on or prohibit their members from accessing and utilizing the Internet, especially in the home environment. However, over time I determined that to recruit a larger number of participants for the study, it was necessary to place the surveys online. I assumed that participants would fill out the surveys and not share their responses with others. I also assumed that participants would answer questions truthfully and honestly with the knowledge that all responses were confidential and anonymous. Finally, I assumed that all participants selected for this study would be truthful about having strong knowledge of the laws of family purity and its intricacies.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited to Orthodox practicing *baal teshuv*s who had an understanding of what the laws of family purity are and access to the tools needed to keep the laws within their community if they kept the laws. Participants in this study lived within well-established Orthodox communities with a mikveh, which is a necessary

tool to keep the laws of family purity and should be present in any functioning Orthodox Jewish community. This study was also limited to Orthodox Jewish *baal teshuvos* who were literate and held at least a high school diploma to be able properly to understand the language within the surveys that would be filled out for the purpose of this study. Since this was an initial study of the population and topic under investigation and research on this topic had not specifically been conducted with this population before, it was not possible to generalize the results of the study.

Limitations

Threats to internal reliability included: (a) participants' motivation to truthfully, accurately, and completely fill out the survey; (b) the ability of instrument design and statistical measures used to detect effects of participants' responses accurately; and (c) potential attrition of participants during the study. Selection bias also posed a threat to internal validity when selecting the participants for the study samples.

Non-random selection of the participants for this sample posed a threat to the external validity of this study. The following factors also posed a potential threat to external validity of this study: (a) effect of selecting participants only from the Northeast region of the United States, (b) decrease of generalizability of results of the study owing to situational factors such as time, place, and type of environment surveys were filled out in, and (c) specificity of the independent variable.

Construct validity of the instruments themselves may also have affected the final outcome of test results. I selected only instruments shown to have been designed with high levels of construct validity for the purpose of collecting data for this study.

Significance of the Study

There has been virtually no research with Orthodox Jewish couples on the topic of marriage (Schnall et al., 2013). Research with the newly religious in this community is particularly lacking. This study was the first of its kind. The laws of family purity are a central feature of Orthodox Jewish marriages. The outcomes of this study provide important scientific knowledge regarding the role of the laws of family purity as either a stressor or strengthener in *baal teshuva* marital relationships.

Ratings of marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and emotional intimacy can provide important quantitative information about the health and overall quality of the marriage. This research supported professional practice by providing new empirically-based information in the area of Orthodox Jewish marriage, an area where there is a scarcity of research currently available. This information may enhance clinicians' ability to deliver multiculturally competent mental healthcare services when working with Orthodox Jewish clients.

Psychological benefits of adherence to the laws of family purity have been found in the literature (Berkowitz, 2008). This study may lead to positive social change by potentially discovering methods to improve marital satisfaction in the newly religious population. In addition, the results of the study may lead to positive social change by providing further evidence supporting the already known positive psychological benefits of the laws of family purity.

Summary

In this study, I used a quantitative research design to investigate whether the strict observance of the Jewish family purity laws enhanced or decreased marital, sexual, and satisfaction scores in *baal teshuvos*. In this chapter, I have summarized the research literature and described a gap in the research for the topic of this study. The following elements were included in this chapter: a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses, a discussion of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks for the study, nature of the study, operational definitions of major terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. The research design chosen for the study, including independent and dependent variables, was discussed at length.

There has been no research with the *baal teshuva* population on the topic of observance of the laws of family purity and marital satisfaction. In Chapter 2, I review empirically-based evidence detailing the association between mental health, marital satisfaction, and sanctification of marriage. There, I also detail why there was a specific need for a study on the topic of marital satisfaction, observance of family purity laws, and the *baal teshuva* population.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Among mental health services offered within Orthodox Jewish communities, the number of clients seeking marital therapy has significantly increased. The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America and the Aleinu Family Resource Center conducted an anonymous Internet-based survey of marital satisfaction in Orthodox Jewish marriages (Schnall et al., 2013) and found that 74% of respondents reported being mostly or extremely satisfied with their marriage. However, while Orthodox Jewish couples report relatively high levels of marital satisfaction, they also report various marital stressors (Schnall et al., 2013).

Role of Family Purity Laws in Orthodox Jewish Marriage

The laws of family purity are an ancient set of Jewish laws governing sexual behavior between husbands and wives (Friedman et al., 2009). Many Orthodox Jewish couples take observance of these laws very seriously (Schnall et al., 2013). Family purity laws, in particular, are in need of research attention because they may serve as either a major stressor or protective factor in marriages. There is a need for more research to determine which of these roles these laws may play in most Orthodox Jewish marriages (Schnall et al., 2013).

Ackerman (2005) conducted one of the first quantitative studies on the topic of the relationship between observance of family purity laws among Jewish married women and marital satisfaction. Ackerman's study demonstrated no statistically significant difference between the two variables. The author concluded that the lack of statistical

significance was because of a major limitation of the study, which was the homogeneity of the sample. Couples in the sample represented a wide variety of number of years married, ages, educational backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, religious observance levels, and religious backgrounds. In addition, the sample was not universally geographically representative. Accordingly, Ackerman suggested that there was a need to investigate many other samples within the Orthodox Jewish world.

Investigating Family Purity with the Baal Teshuva Population

One such sample includes a growing sector worldwide in the Orthodox Jewish population known as *baal teshuvos*. *Baal teshuvos* are individuals who grew up non-observant and became Orthodox at a later point in their lives (Cahn, 2012). According to Schnall et al. (2013), the mean overall marital satisfaction of *baal teshuvos* was not significantly lower than that of other groups. However, it has been shown that this population is at risk of psychosocial dysfunction (Schnall et al., 2013). Many married *baal teshuvos* are in need of quality mental health care (Schnall et al., 2013). Problems with physical intimacy/sexuality and emotional satisfaction have been shown to be major areas contributing to marital discord in the *baal teshuva* population (Schnall et al., 2013).

Universal Observance of Family Purity and Implications for Marital Quality

In one study with a sample of Orthodox Jews, researchers found that laws were being violated among many couples (Guterman, 2008). The sample represented Jews who identified as Orthodox. Participants represented a variety of number of years married, ages, educational backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, religious observance levels, and religious backgrounds. Laws considered more lenient were violated more

frequently than those considered more strict. More couples violated laws in the second week than in the first week. There was also a significant negative correlation between how strictly religious couples rated themselves and the number of actual transgressions. Thus, strict adherence to the laws of family purity is not universal among all Orthodox couples.

Previous researchers have pointed out the many psychological benefits of strict adherence to the family purity laws (Berkowitz, 2008), though none have specifically studied newly religious couples. Some of the major benefits include increased nonsexual communication during a period of abstinence and a decrease in sexual boredom. Berkowitz (2008) stated that knowing this information, some marriage and sex therapists working with the general population have begun recommending periods of sexual separation to help decrease sexual boredom among couples.

No studies have been conducted to investigate whether strict adherence to the family purity laws among the newly religious contributes to marital harmony or adds additional stress. This research is particularly important because it investigates whether strict adherence to the family purity laws provides psychological benefits to marital satisfaction in the newly religious population.

Chapter Overview

This chapter begins with an in-depth overview of how this topic originally developed and evolved over time. I discuss the initial phases of the literature review process, including keyword searches of academic databases. Next, I discuss the lack of research on the topic of interest and the associated gap in the literature that I found. I

then move to a discussion of the theory I selected for the purposes of this study before concluding with a synopsis of the literature review. This synopsis includes an overview of the limitations and strengths of the research conducted on the topic, major research questions, methodology for data collection, and benefits, practical applications, and the critical need for this study.

Literature Search Strategy

In the early stages of the literature review process, I used database available via Walden University's Thoreau Multi-Database Search. Key search terms included *laws of family purity, Orthodox Jewish Marriages, marital satisfaction and Orthodox Jewish marriages, marital aatisfaction and family purity laws, sexual satisfaction and marriage, emotional intimacy and marriage, relational cultural spirituality, relational spirituality, and sanctification of marriage*. The majority of studies I found using these key terms were published between 2005 and 2014. Only a citation of Ackerman's (2005) dissertation was provided on the Thoreau Multi-Database Search, so I retrieved the full dissertation from EThOS, which is a website that has access to over 400,000 doctoral theses.

I used Google Scholar for the key search terms *multiculturally competent mental health care, relational-cultural theory, relational spirituality, sanctification of marriage, emotional intimacy and marriage, sexual satisfaction and marriage, and religiosity and spirituality in marriage*. A majority of studies in these areas were published between 2012 and 2015.

Theoretical Foundation

Origins of Relational-Cultural Theory

RCT was originally developed through the work of psychoanalyst Jean Baker Miller (Jordan & Hartling, 2002). Miller worked together with psychologists Judith Jordan, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey to explore women's development and re-examine developmental psychology as it relates to women's mental health. In her book *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, Miller discussed the results of their research and outlined the fundamental concepts of RCT (Jordan, 2010).

RCT principles have roots in feminist, multicultural, and psychodynamic approaches (Frey, 2013). Theoretical concepts of RCT evolved from concern that already-existing theories placed blame on clients for their problems, rather than focusing on relationships and contextual factors in clients' lives (Hall, Barden, & Conley, 2014). RCT became a theory emphasizing relationships and external factors as opposed to internal pathology and mental illness.

Important Constructs of Relational-Cultural Theory

According to RCT, people naturally yearn for meaningful relationships and thrive and grow when engaged in mutually growth-fostering relationships with others (Lenz, 2014). Relational disconnections are dysfunctional styles of relating. These develop when an individual yearns for healthy connections with others but develops inauthentic styles of relating, influenced by social-cultural pressures. A paradox lies at the heart of this dichotomy. Relational disconnection may stem from a fear that taking the risk of being vulnerable to others may only isolate them further. People distance themselves

from their authentic selves through behaviors that generate disconnection from others (Trepal, 2010). These distancing behaviors often begin as strategies for survival and self-protection. For example, an individual may avoid eye contact with an individual they may want to make a connection with, for fear of being rejected. The person may do this even if the individual they want to connect with initiates a smile and makes eye contact with them.

RCT postulates that relationships and interdependence, rather than separation and autonomy, are the ideal conduits for development of a healthy sense of self throughout the lifespan (Frey, 2013). RCT deviates from traditional theories of human development because relationships rather than individuation and autonomy, are the catalyst for growth and positive change (Brady, Gingras, & Aphramor, 2013).

Miller specifically described what she termed “five good things” as key characteristics of growth-fostering relationships. These include (a) increased vitality; (b) increased ability to take action; (c) a clear picture of oneself, the partner, and the overall relationship; (d) a sense of self-worth; and (e) a desire for relationships beyond one particular relationship (Jordan & Hartling, 2002). According to RCT theory, human suffering is caused by relational disconnection, while health is fostered by mutual empathy, empowerment, and the ability to express and be one’s true self in relationships (Brady et al., 2013). Relational images are people’s assumptions of how others perceive them and will respond to them (Trepal, 2010). Relational disconnection is caused by imbalances in power within relationships that prevent people from experiencing mutual

empathy, empowerment, and authenticity in relationships (Brady et al., 2013). Resolving these disconnections within relationships is key to creating optimal health.

Relational Spirituality, Marriage, and Marital Satisfaction

A relational view of spirituality has in recent years been considered an effective framework for integrating and conceptualizing constructs of spirituality in post-modern psychology (Reynolds, 2012). Spirituality is one of the key forces shaping development along the lifespan and has significant implications for individual well-being and the quality of one's relationships with others. Research has shown that faith, belief in the importance of a relationship with G-d, and communication in marriage are essential to many in American society (Prabu & Stafford, 2015).

Constructs of love, commitment, forgiveness, and sacrifice are crucial to the relational dynamics in a marriage. Individuals who experience higher spiritual maturity and greater qualitative relational experience with the sacred can be expected to have greater relational experiences with their marital partner (Reynolds, 2012). These same couples can be expected to have high-quality communication, which when combined with love, commitment, forgiveness, and sacrifice, leads to greater overall marital quality and satisfaction (Prabu & Stafford, 2015).

From a RCT perspective, acute disconnections are not uncommon within the marital relationship (Jordan, 2001). These disconnections, when addressed, can lead to an even stronger connection. RCT takes into account forces such as power, culture, and gender that can complicate connection between married partners (Vogel, 2007). For example, a couple may experience an imbalance in authority over the couple's financial

affairs. The male may take control of paying bills and managing their bank accounts and require his wife to ask permission from him for spending money. Partners can learn to balance these factors and create growth-fostering relationships containing the elements of high-quality communication, love, commitment, forgiveness, and sacrifice, which lead to greater overall marital quality and satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

Mahoney's Relational Spirituality Framework

RCT emphasizes the human need for meaningful and mutually empathic relationships over the course of the lifespan (Lenz, 2014). In an extensive review of the literature, Mahoney and Cano (2014A, 2014B) found a paucity of research available on the role of spirituality and religion on couples' functioning. Mahoney (2010) developed the relational spirituality framework to enable researchers to expand empirical studies in this area. The framework is still relatively new. It draws support and further expands on RCT to address how the human search for the sacred or divine is intertwined within the search for and development of human relationships (Mahoney, 2013).

Mahoney developed the relational spirituality framework to demonstrate that religiousness of one or more family members helps maintain and form family relationships and to show how specific spiritual mechanisms and religiosity shape family relationships (Mahoney, 2010). She conducted an extensive search of the literature between 1999 and 2010 and found 184 studies published on religion and family life during that period.

Major Constructs of Relational Spirituality

Relational spirituality discusses situations where the search for the sacred or divine is intertwined within the search and development of human relationships (Mahoney, 2013). The framework encompasses three stages individuals experience across the lifespan in this search for relationships. The stages include (a) discovery—creating and structuring the relationships, (b) maintenance—conserving and protecting the relationships, and (c) transformation—reforming or exiting distressed relationships when there is a significant need for change. The peer-reviewed literature available on the topic of relational spirituality with couples showed that specific spiritual beliefs or behaviors appear to strengthen generally happy marriages within heterosexual couples (Mahoney & Cano, 2014a, 2014b). Constructs that have been explored with this population include the sanctity of marriage, spiritual intimacy, petitionary prayer for one's partner, and religious/spiritual coping with negative life events.

Mahoney's Sanctification of Marriage

Mahoney's sanctification of marriage defines sanctification as the degree to which marital partners view their marriages as a reflection of their beliefs in G-d and their religious faith (Rusu et al., 2015). There is a growing body of research demonstrating the positive outcomes of the sanctification of marriage on marital quality, satisfaction, collaboration, and forgiveness. Evidence is also increasingly showing that religiosity and spirituality are associated with interpersonal and intrapersonal qualities of well-being, happiness, self-esteem, and optimism (Rusu et al., 2015).

Spiritual Intimacy

Spiritual intimacy as a construct represents how invested couples are in their unions, how well they discuss emotionally sensitive information with one another, and whether they are able to respond to each other's disclosures of this information in a supportive and nonjudgmental manner (Kusner et al., 2014). When studying sanctification and spiritual intimacy with couples who were newly transitioning to parenthood, researchers found high levels of both constructs in relationships. Both constructs were associated with greater motivation to resolve spousal conflicts with kindness and with an ability to resist urges to fall into negativity (Kusner et al., 2014).

Bagarozzi (2014) stated that intimacy in any of its forms is a truly universal human need that originates from and grows into a survival need for attachment and is not merely a basic human want or desire. According to Bagarozzi, spiritual intimacy is the most profound and powerful dimension of intimacy among couples.

Relational Spirituality, Sanctification, and Marital Satisfaction Among

Baal Teshuvras. Research with couples has found a direct association between individual religiosity and marital satisfaction (Prabu & Stafford, 2015). Research on the relational aspects of spirituality and marriage is beginning to focus on how individuals' relationships with G-d operate through couples' joint religious communication. According to a study conducted by Prabu and Stafford (2015) on this topic, the interaction between an individual's relationship with G-d and couples' joint religious communication predicts marital satisfaction. The major findings of this study support

Mahoney's framework of sanctification of marriage, which originates from relational concepts.

The sanctification of marriage and spiritual intimacy constructs of relational spirituality discuss specific ways spirituality and religion may empower and strengthen marriages. Research with couples representing specific cultural or religious subgroups has not been conducted to investigate how these constructs function within particular religious subgroups or cultures to date (Mahoney, 2014). *Baal teshuv*s previously lived a non-religious, secular lifestyle and then later embraced the Orthodox Jewish way of life by choice. Like other subgroups within Orthodox Jewish communities, many embrace the laws of family purity. These are an ancient set of Jewish laws governing sexual behavior between husbands and wives (Friedman et al., 2009). *Baal teshuv*s are willing to abide by them because of strong religious conviction (Friedman et al., 2009). However, strict adherence to these laws is not necessarily universal among *baal teshuv*s (Guterman, 2008).

*Baal teshuv*s' choice of a spiritual and religious lifestyle demonstrates their desire to sanctify their marriage to create both personal well-being and marital harmony. However, *baal teshuv*s are highly likely to suffer from psychosocial dysfunction. They are in need of quality health care, and particularly suffer increased rates of psychiatric disorders (Schnall, 2006).

According to Kor, Mikulincer, and Pirutinsky (2012), *baal teshuv*s' return to Judaism requires a total transformation of belief, behavior, and identity. The long-term effects of this process are unclear; however, studies have shown that reported stress levels

in family functioning, marital harmony, and parenting are high among this population; particularly in the United States. In addition, Kor et al. stated that there is a growing body of evidence that *baal teshuvras* report higher levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance than Orthodox Jewish non-returnees. This is often attributed to difficulties in interpersonal relationships *baal teshuvras* faced in their lives before becoming religious. In addition, it is not uncommon for *baal teshuvras* to face difficulties with integration into religious communities. This includes difficulty relating to and forming connections with nonreligious returnees (Kor et al., 2012).

Tova Lane (2015) discussed many of the obstacles *baal teshuvras* reported when trying to integrate into their new way of life and new community. Many *baal teshuvras* stated that the difficulties they encountered trying to assimilate into their Orthodox community fully left them with a sense of shame and tension that stayed within them for many years after initially becoming religious. Many felt they never fully mastered learning and integrating the unfamiliar cultural norms of Orthodox life, while others described feeling marginalized, judged, or not accepted as equal members of their community.

Problems with physical intimacy, sexuality, and emotional satisfaction have been shown to be major areas contributing to marital discord in the *baal teshuva* population (Schnall et al., 2013). However, Schnall et al. (2013) reported that *baal teshuvras*' levels of reported marital satisfaction are only slightly lower than observant from birth Orthodox Jews, which demonstrates the central role spirituality and religiosity plays in their marriages.

The relational spirituality framework can help explain what makes these marriages so strong and successful. Those *baal teshuvras* who firmly commit to adhering to the laws of family purity most likely sanctify G-d within their marriage. They also most likely demonstrate high levels of the desirable characteristics seen in previous research on the sanctification of marriage that makes these marriages successful. Despite their slightly lower levels of reported marital satisfaction than that seen in their religious-from-birth counterparts, *baal teshuvras* who sanctify their marriages appear to demonstrate strong and successful marriages.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Role of Religion versus Spirituality in Marital Satisfaction

In recent years, significant research and interest have been paid to providing enhanced quality of multi-cultural competent mental health care services to minority client populations (Schnall et al., 2014). The multicultural counseling movement has emphasized the secular elements of identity in its research but has ignored religious identity. This find is striking, considering the large amount of research pointing to the important role of religiosity and spirituality in mental well-being.

The growth of cultural diversity and religious society in American society necessitates an understanding of the importance of religiosity and spirituality in psychological research and practice. Surveys of adult samples representing the general population in the United States show that 95% of respondents profess a belief in G-d, 94% are religiously affiliated, 85% state that religion is very important to them, and 4 out

of 10 regularly attend church, synagogue, a mosque, or other religious institutions (Delaney, Miller, & Bisono, 2013).

There is an important distinction between religion and spirituality (Tovar-Murray, 2011). Religion is based on social and institutional relationships. Spirituality is based on finding comfort in the unseen.

Marital satisfaction is defined as a global evaluation of the marriage (Zhang et al., 2012). Spirituality often plays a stronger role than religion itself in marital satisfaction (Williams, Ulm, & Banker, 2013). Particularly, the sanctification of marriage, an important component of spirituality, has been found to be a strong predictor of marital satisfaction (Stafford, Prabu, & McPherson, 2013).

Marital Satisfaction, Spiritual Intimacy, Sanctification, and Marital Quality

Marital satisfaction, spirituality, and aspects of marital quality are strongly linked to one another. Family scholars argue that the interaction between religion, spirituality, and marital functioning cannot be overlooked because they play an integral role in many aspects of couples' daily lives (Rauer & Volling, 2015). These interactions have important implications for how spouses behave toward one another. For example, research shows that criticism and negative communication are significant predictors of relationship dissolution, marital distress, and divorce (Pereyra, Sandberg, Bean, & Busby, 2015). Research has also demonstrated that couples with higher levels of religiosity and spirituality tend to have lower levels of conflict and negative communication than non-religious couples (Prabu & Stafford, 2015).

Religious values help couples share mutual perspectives and work together to navigate normal problems that come up in marriage. Religious values can be utilized as a guideline in the activities of marriage including sexual relations, gender roles, and self-sacrifice in marriage. In addition, couples who view G-d as a third partner in their marriages often invest significantly more time, attention, and energy to their spouse's needs (Nelson, Manning Kirk, Ane, & Serres, 2011). Previous research has shown that couples who can state specifically how G-d works in their marriage can also articulate specific ways their marriage is meaningful and successful (Nelson et al., 2011).

There is a growing body of empirical evidence pointing to the positive associations between mental health, marital satisfaction, spirituality, and religiosity. According to Rusu and Turliuc (2011), most of the research investigating the relationship between mental health and spirituality is conducted in the United States and with individuals who practice Christianity. While this research has found positive associations between religion, spirituality, and mental health, more work was needed to identify the associations between mental health and spirituality among other religions and in other parts of the world. Kim-Prieto (2014) stated that this gap had been addressed increasingly in recent years.

Ellison, Henderson, Glenn, and Harkrider (2011) utilized data from a statewide probability sample of Texas adults. Their findings showed that sanctification of marriage predicted positive outcomes for the marital quality of the married sample as a whole. This pattern was particularly pronounced among couples experiencing extreme financial stressors or high levels of general perceived stress. This finding highlights the buffer or

protective effect of spiritual intimacy and marital sanctification that was seen in other research (Lopez, Riggs, Pollard, & Hook, 2011).

Other Positive Contributions of Religion and Spirituality to Marital Quality

There is growing evidence that a variety of religious beliefs and practices may mediate the association between spirituality, religion, and marital satisfaction (Olson, Marshall, Goddard, & Schramm, 2014). Quantitative research has demonstrated that greater attendance at religious services or deep involvement in organized religion increases the chances of getting married and being happy with one's marriage (Mahoney & Cano, 2014a). Researchers have also found an association between positive coping within the marriage, couples' reports of sacred rituals associated with their faith, and shared religious beliefs between spouses (Olson et al., 2014). The data provided a preliminary understanding regarding how religious practices and spirituality processes create positive marital functioning (Olson et al., 2014).

According to Kusner et al. (2014), sanctification as a construct represents a form of spiritual cognition. When couples are inspired by the perception that their marriage has divine character and significance, they are willing to demonstrate greater self-control when inevitable conflicts arise in marital situations. They utilize greater thought and care when communicating and discussing these situations with their partner. These behaviors avoid hurt or upset that happens when couples do not exercise thought and care, and demonstrates a buffer effect sanctification can provide over during conflict in marriage (DeMaris et al., 2010).

Dollahite, Hawkins, and Parr (2012) found a central theme common among participants of all faiths included within the study: Marriage is an entity that is divine. Researchers interviewed couples from different religions and focused on how beliefs about marriage and religion affected the meaning of marriage for them (Dollahite et al., 2012). The findings demonstrated a belief that a well-functioning marriage surpasses the emotional, physical, and spiritual capabilities of an individual, couple, or family unit.

Religious commitment improves communication and the ability to work together peacefully during times where potential conflicts surface. Lopez et al. (2011) found that high levels of religious commitment are helpful for couples who experience difficulty being intimate with one another in one or multiple areas of intimacy. The researchers stated that this finding was consistent with prior research on the moderating effect of religiosity on intimacy between spouses.

A number of other factors have been associated with spirituality, religiosity, the sanctification of marriage, and high levels of marital satisfaction. Commitment and empathy have been found to be as important as spirituality on rated marital quality (Mitchell, Edwards, Hunt, & Poelstra, 2015). Research has consistently demonstrated that these two factors are reliable predictors of marital satisfaction (Goddard, Marshall, Olson & Dennis, 2012). In addition, involvement in supportive social networks is associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction (Brackin, 2013). Attending church, as an example, offers couples opportunities to socialize and make connections with others. This decreases depression and loneliness that can decrease couples' marital satisfaction.

Link Between Sexual Satisfaction and Marital Satisfaction

Sexual satisfaction is defined as the couples' subjective perception of the sexual relationship (Zhang et al., 2012). Sánchez-Fuentes, Santos-Iglesias, and Sierra (2014) found a strong association between sexual satisfaction and the following variables: (a) individual socio-demographic, psychological, physical, and health characteristics, (b) variables of intimate relationships and sexual response, (c) social support and family relationships, and (d) cultural beliefs, values, and religion. While in some cultures sexual satisfaction may be viewed as taboo or a male prerogative, Western cultural norms emphasize the importance of both female and male satisfaction with their sexual lives, especially for health and life satisfaction (Rehman, Fallis, & Byers, 2013). Feelings of guilt among females about engaging in sex were related to lower sexual satisfaction and later initiation of sexual activity (Abdolsalehi-Najafi & Beckman, 2013). Research has shown that the reasons people choose to engage in sex have an enormous effect on the quality of their relationship (Muisse, Impett, & Desmarais, 2013). Approach goals are defined as pursuing sexual relations for enhancing intimacy and sexual satisfaction. Avoidance goals are defined as pursuing sexual relations to avoid disappointing a partner. Pursuing approach goals is associated with greater well-being and enhanced relationship and sexual satisfaction, while pursuing avoidance goals has been associated with negative emotions, relationship conflict, and low sexual satisfaction. Harnessing healthy feelings about sex plays an important role in the ability to achieve sexual satisfaction and satisfaction in other areas of life satisfaction.

Marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are closely linked (Timm & Keiley, 2011). Couples who report higher levels of marital satisfaction often also report higher levels of sexual satisfaction. Effective communication between partners is an important predictor of relationship satisfaction (Montesi et al., 2013). Couples who struggle with fear of intimacy and open sexual communication, often struggle with sexual satisfaction as well. For example, one study showed that in a sample of men and women with sexual arousal difficulties, intimacy on an emotional level was the main predictor of sexual satisfaction (Pascoal, Narciso, & Pereira, 2012). Findings were consistent across men and women.

There is also a strong link between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction, self-esteem, general quality of life, psychological well-being, happiness, and satisfaction with life (Dogan, Tugut, & Golbasi, 2013). Couples who reported higher levels of mental health and frequent engagement in sex also reported higher positive marital quality (Galinsky & Waite, 2013). Sexual satisfaction is also a strong predictor of reported feelings of emotional closeness between husbands and wives (Yoo, Bartle-Haring, Day, & Gangamma, 2013).

Religion, Spirituality, and Sexual Satisfaction

Studies on the role of religion in marital sexuality demonstrate that couples with no religious affiliations are the least likely to report emotional or physical satisfaction with their sexual lives (Hernandez, Mahoney & Pargament, 2011). There is also a growing body of evidence that viewing an intimate relationship as sanctified is strongly tied to greater satisfaction within the relationship (Hernandez, Mahoney, & Pargament,

2011). Sanctification of sex and sexual satisfaction within marriage has a clear and powerful effect on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of the couple and overall quality of the marital relationship.

Many religious faiths tend to discourage or prohibit premarital sexual activity, consistent with the pattern of religious people reporting less engagement in extramarital activity than nonreligious people (Burris, Smith, & Carlson, 2009). Couples who sanctify their marriages show greater willingness to invest in and commit to the relationship have access to religious and community resources that strengthen the relationship and derive greater overall happiness and satisfaction from the relationship (Hernandez et al., 2011).

Link Between Marital Satisfaction and Emotional Intimacy

Emotional intimacy is a feeling of closeness to one's partner that enables sharing one's feelings and experiencing understanding, affirmation, and acceptance within the relationship (Stulhofer et al., 2014). The quality of relationships is often severely hindered by problems with emotional intimacy. According to Carter and Carter (2010), 57% of couples indicated emotional affection and communication as major difficulties in their relationships. In addition, 20% of these couples reported difficulties with trusting their partners and an inability to confide in their partners. Problems with emotional intimacy are also associated with other relationship issues such as jealousy or lack of security between partners (Yoo et al., 2014).

Premarital education in emotional intimacy can be helpful for ensuring partners have the basic skills they need to cope with normal problems that arise in marriage and can relate to one another. Maybruch, Pirutinsky, and Pelcovitz (2014) found that

premarital education focusing on a religious approach and practices regarding the sexual relationship among 1,244 married Orthodox Jews, was significantly associated with greater marital quality. Teaching these skills early on can potentially enhance emotional intimacy and marital quality by enhancing spirituality and sanctity within the marriage

Investigating Marital Satisfaction Factors with Baal Teshuvras' Marriages

Investigators increasingly noted that there had been virtually no research with Orthodox Jewish couples on the topic of marriage (Schnall et al., 2013). Spirituality and religiosity play a central role in the Orthodox Jewish way of life. This is particularly evident in the regulation of family purity laws on emotional, physical, and sexual intimacy between husbands and wives.

There is a critical need to investigate the marital stressors in Orthodox Jewish subgroups, particularly the exponentially growing *baal teshuva* subgroup. Problems with physical intimacy/sexuality and emotional satisfaction have been shown to be major areas contributing to marital discord in the *baal teshuva* population (Schnall et al., 2013). Research with the newly religious is particularly lacking. This is of concern since the newly religious are at increased risk of psychosocial dysfunction as opposed to other groups within Orthodox Jewish communities (Schnall, 20006).

Ackerman (2005) initiated one of the first studies of Orthodox Jewish marriages by studying the relationship between marital satisfaction and observance of family purity laws. Her study included Orthodox Jewish couples representing a range of years married, ages, educational backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, religious observance levels, and religious backgrounds. In addition, the sample was not universally geographically

representative. A major limitation of the study was that it was a mixed sample and did not represent subgroups within the Orthodox Jewish world such as *baal teshuv*as.

Thus, there is still no information to address important questions about the characteristics of marital satisfaction among *baal teshuv*as. Some important questions to ask include: (a) are there significant differences in the overall marital satisfaction ratings of *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity versus those who do not, (b) are there significant differences in the sexual satisfaction ratings of *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity versus those who do not, and (c) are there significant differences in the emotional satisfaction ratings of *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity versus those who do not?

Summary and Conclusions

Mahoney's sanctification of marriage theory defines sanctification as the degree to which marital partners view their marriages as a reflection of their beliefs in G-d and their religious faith (Rusu et al., 2015). According to Kim-Prieto (2014), there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating positive associations between mental health, marital satisfaction, spirituality, and religiosity. There is also a growing body of evidence that viewing an intimate relationship as sanctified is strongly tied to greater satisfaction within the relationship (Kim-Prieto, 2014). Religiosity and spirituality are associated with interpersonal and intrapersonal qualities of well-being, happiness, self-esteem, and optimism (Rusu et al., 2015). Religion and spirituality help couples share mutual perspectives, work together to navigate normal problems, and guide couples in sexual relations, gender roles, and self-sacrifice in marriage (Rusu et al., 2015). These couples

show greater willingness to invest in and commit to the relationship, have access to religious and community resources that strengthen the relationship, and derive greater overall happiness and satisfaction from the relationship (Rusu et al., 2015).

There are many different dimensions of intimacy that reflect the basic human need for attachment to others. Sanctification of marriage predicts positive outcomes for the marital quality of married couples, including couples' resilience and marital quality when experiencing extreme financial stressors or high levels of general perceived stress (Lopez et al., 2011). The literature supports a central theme that spiritual intimacy and sanctification of marriage strengthens couples' quality of marriage and provides a buffer or protective effect for the marriage (Lopez et al., 2015).

Ratings of marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and emotional intimacy can provide important quantitative information about the health and overall quality of the marriage. Marital satisfaction is defined as a global evaluation of the marriage (Zhang et al., 2012). Sexual satisfaction is defined as the couples' subjective perception of the sexual relationship (Zhang et al., 2012). Emotional intimacy is a feeling of closeness to one's partner that enables sharing one's feelings and experiencing understanding, affirmation, and acceptance within the relationship (Stulhofer et al., 2014). All three are closely linked with marital quality, spirituality, and other essential predictors of marital quality including self-esteem, general quality of life, psychological well-being, happiness, and satisfaction with life (Dogan et al., 2013). The research generally points to higher ratings of marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and emotional intimacy when

spirituality, marital quality, self-esteem, general quality of life, psychological well-being, happiness, and satisfaction with life are high.

The laws of family purity are an ancient set of Jewish laws governing sexual behavior between husbands and wives (Friedman et al., 2009). Many Orthodox Jewish couples take observance of these laws very seriously (Schnall et al., 2013). Spirituality is a central feature of the Orthodox Jewish way of life, with the laws of family purity potentially playing a powerful role in marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and overall quality of the marriage.

While Orthodox Jewish couples report relatively high levels of marital satisfaction, they also report various marital stressors (Schnall et al., 2013). These stressors may affect ratings either in marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, or emotional intimacy, or all of these areas. Family purity laws are in particular need of research attention because they may serve as either a major stressor or protective factor in these marriages.

*Baal Teshuv*s are individuals who grew up non-observant and became Orthodox at a later point in their lives (Cahn, 2012). While the mean reported overall marital satisfaction of *baal teshuv*s is not significantly lower than that of other groups (Schnall et al., 2013), it is well-known that this population is at higher risk for psychiatric disorders and psychosocial dysfunction than Orthodox non-returnees (Schnall, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the family purity laws enhanced or decreased marital satisfaction scores in *baal teshuv*s. To address this gap, this study utilized a quantitative approach. A MANOVA and 2-factor ANOVAS of

marital satisfaction scores were conducted with a sample of baal teshuva couples and a sample of couples who do not observe family purity laws. Since there was no prior quantitative research with *baal teshuvos* on this topic and comparison of multiple independent variables with dependent variables was necessary, MANOVA and 2-factor ANOVAs were appropriate. Differences in the mean marital satisfaction scores of *baal teshuva* couples versus couples who do not observe family purity laws, aided current understanding of whether observance of the laws contributed to marital stress in *baal teshuva* marital relationships.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This chapter includes a description of this study's research design, sample characteristics, procedures for recruiting participants, instrumentation, and plan for analyzing the data. In the overview of the sample characteristics, I describe the highly specific qualifications individuals needed to possess to participate in the study. Methods of data collection and rationale for the study are discussed in detail, and I conclude the chapter with a discussion of threats to the validity of the study and ethical considerations.

The purpose of this study was to examine differences in marital, emotional, and sexual satisfaction ratings in two groups of *baal teshuv*s, including a group who strictly observed the ancient Jewish laws of family purity and a group who did not strictly observe the ancient Jewish laws of family purity. The outcomes of the study may contribute to scholarly and clinical understanding regarding whether or not the strict observance of the Jewish laws of family purity contributes to marital stress in *baal teshuva* marital relationships.

Research Design and Rationale

I designed this study to investigate whether strict observance of the Jewish family purity laws enhanced or decreased marital, sexual, and satisfaction scores in *baal teshuv*s. This study utilized the quasi-experimental design. This design was appropriate since participants were non-randomly assigned into each of the four groups in the study (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013).

For this study, the independent variables included gender and identification as either *baal teshuvras* who strictly observed the family purity laws or *baal teshuvras* who did not strictly observe the laws. The dependent variables were rated survey scores in marital, sexual, or emotional satisfaction, and the sub-dimensional scores included under marital and emotional satisfaction. Marital satisfaction was measured by the RDAS. Scores measured three dimensions of marital satisfaction including (a) consensus, (b) satisfaction, and (c) cohesion. Emotional satisfaction was measured by STLS, which measured emotional satisfaction according to three components: (a) intimacy, (b) passion, and (c) commitment. Sexual satisfaction was measured by the NSSS, which provided a single overall rating of sexual satisfaction based on participant responses. To find group differences for marital satisfaction, I used a MANOVA. The MANOVA was the optimal choice for marital satisfaction scores owing to the several sub-dimensional scores for the RDAS, creating multiple dependent variables. This protected against Type I errors that might occur if multiple ANOVA's were conducted, and revealed differences among the independent variables that might not otherwise be found when conducting an ANOVA. Two-factor ANOVAs were conducted for sexual satisfaction since only a single score is obtained for this category. I also ran a two-factor ANOVA for emotional satisfaction since the subtest scores for the STLS did not meet the assumptions for a MANOVA. A total of two two-factor ANOVAs were conducted.

This study can be replicated larger sample sizes. The study may also enable researchers to develop other studies of a similar nature that elaborate on the findings of this study. In the instrumentation and operationalization section of this chapter, I discuss

full operationalization of the constructs of the three dimensions of marital satisfaction (as measured by the RDAS), three components of emotional intimacy (as measured by the STLS).

The design choice enabled me to use the same respondents to provide responses on one of each of the three areas under investigation, including marital, sexual, and emotional satisfaction scores. This was time and cost efficient since recruitment of participants for this study was difficult and limited because of highly specific qualifications to participate in each of the samples. In addition, by using the same individuals to respond to survey items in each of the three areas, the design choice increased the likelihood of consistency across response items. As this study was the first of its kind, this increased the accuracy of the data when used for comparison in future research with similar samples.

Methodology

Population

The target population of this study was male and female *baal teshuv*s who adhere to the ancient Jewish laws of family purity, and male and female *baal teshuv*s who do not adhere to these laws. The approximate size of this population is approximately 100 couples in a typical mid-sized to large Orthodox Jewish community. The approximate desirable size of a sample from the target population included 100 males and females in total.

Sampling Procedures

Participants. The participants of this study included Orthodox Jewish couples who identified as *baal teshuv*as. Participants were recruited from several large, well-established Orthodox Jewish communities in the northeastern section of the United States, where some of the largest and most diverse Orthodox Jewish communities in the United States are located. I was given permission from primary care offices, local medical centers, and libraries in selected communities to post advertisements when recruiting participants (see Appendix A). Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) chronological age of both male and female spouse—for the purposes of this study, males, over the age of 20, and females ages 20 and older who were not post-menopausal, were included in this study; (b) geographic location of residence including address, city, state, and region of United States where couple lives—for the purposes of this study, only males and females living in the Northeast were included in the study because this was a preliminary study and the largest Orthodox Jewish communities in the United States exist in the Northeast; (c) self-identification as a *baal teshuva*; and (d) rating of observance of laws of family purity by placing a check in a box next to one of the following categories: strict, moderately strict, minimally strict, or do not observe. From this information, I selected applicants who met criteria for inclusion in the study and placed them into one of the four independent variable groups.

Power analysis. I used G*Power (version 3.1.9.2) to calculate desired sample size. Based on a medium effect size (f) and standard alpha and power ($f^2 = .05$, alpha = .05, power = .80), the study required a minimum sample of 108 participants.

Procedures for Recruitment

First, I posted advertisements in local community circulars, bulletins, libraries, and local mental health centers in selected communities. The advertisements briefly outlined the purpose of the study and provided the researcher's contact information. Next, during the initial phase of recruitment, potential participants were asked to fill out a one-page questionnaire (see Appendix B). The questionnaire asked participants to identify their (a) chronological age of both male and female spouse; (b) geographic location of residence including address, city, state, and region of United States where the couple lives; (c) number of years married; (d) number of children in the household (if any), ages, and genders of each child; (e) identification as religious from birth or *baal teshuva*; and (f) rating of observance of laws of family purity by placing check in a box next to one of the following categories: strict, moderately strict, minimally strict, or do not observe. Inclusion criteria included those participants who were in heterosexual marriages, identified as *baal teshuv*as, and were living in Orthodox Jewish communities in the northeastern United States. I selected the applicants who met these criteria for inclusion in the study and placed them in one of the two independent variable groups.

Packets with copies of an informed consent form and each of the marital, sexual, and emotional satisfaction surveys selected for this study were mailed to each of the couples recruited for the study. Instructions included in the packet requested that couples fill out surveys separately and without discussing their survey ratings with one another. I initially used mailed paper surveys as opposed to online surveys since, in Orthodox Jewish communities, it is not uncommon that many households do not have Internet

access or computers in the household. However, at a later time in the recruitment process, I placed the surveys online to enable an increase in the number of study participants. The informed consent included: (a) a detailed description of the purpose of the study, (b) a discussion of how results of the study would be used, (c) a statement discussing participants' anonymity throughout the study, (d) a statement that all information was confidential and would be kept locked up in the researcher's office, (e) a statement of the potential risks and benefits of the study, (f) a statement that participants could withdraw at any time and did not have to fill out parts of the questionnaires that made them uncomfortable, (g) a statement that participants would not be required to fill out any more surveys or screenings once they had completed the surveys, and (h) a statement that participants should mail results back to me within 30 days. To increase the response rate, I included a self-addressed stamped envelope in each packet.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

RDAS. The RDAS (see Appendix) is a 14-item measure of adjustment in relationships that was developed to improve upon the reliability and validity of the items in the original Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995). The original scale was created in 1976 by Spanier to measure the separate dimensions of marital adjustment including (a) matters of importance to marital functioning, (b) dyadic satisfaction, (c) dyadic cohesion, and (d) affectional expression. The developers of the RDAS printed the instrument in the appendix of a journal article they published in 1995 on the instrument's validity and reliability (Busby et al., 1995). The survey is thus accessible for use upon retrieval of the article.

Research indicated that some of the items in the original instrument were homogeneous while others were more heterogeneous (Busby et al., 1995). The developers of the RDAS eliminated Homogeneous items to correct this problem. The developers of the RDAS conducted several confirmatory factor analyses using a sample of distressed and nondistressed couples. The developers of the RDAS compared results of the factor analyses against the original sample from Spanier and Thompson's 1982 study used to develop the original Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

Crane and Middleton (2000) described the RDAS as a well-improved version of the original DAS with the following advantages: (a) its brevity, (b) higher levels of construct validity, (c) good internal consistency, (d) multidimensionality, and (e) excellent ability to distinguish between distressed and nondistressed couples. The RDAS was constructed from a sample of 242 couples seeking marital therapy in the clinical programs of marital and family therapy at Brigham Young and Montana State Universities (Busby et al., 1995). The sample was predominantly Caucasian, middle-income, and first-married couples with an average age of 30.7 years old. The researchers conducted confirmatory factor analyses with several samples to determine construct validity, criterion validity, and internal consistency and reliability. Totals for internal consistency range from 0 to 69, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient at .90 and Spearman-Brown split-half reliability coefficient of .95. The Pearson coefficient for RDAS and DAS was found to be .973, implying the RDAS has the ability to predict scores between distressed and non-distressed couples with better than chance accuracy.

Scores of marital satisfaction are separated into three dimensions of marital satisfaction, including: (a) consensus, (b) satisfaction, and (c) cohesion (Busby et al., 1995). Scoring is based on the total sum of responses on Likert-style scored items. Consensus encompasses couples' ratings of ability to make decisions together, common values, and mutual feelings of affection toward one another. Satisfaction encompasses couples' ratings of stability within the marriage and ability to deal with conflicts that inevitably arise in marriage. Cohesion encompasses couples' ratings of engaging in activities together and ability to converse and discuss issues together.

This instrument was appropriate for this study because it has been shown to be a culturally and psychometrically valid instrument that measures marital satisfaction from four vantage points via its subscales (Hollist et al., 2012). Clinicians have used it to target specific areas of strength and weakness in couples' relationships. It facilitated my ability to discriminate the data and find specific differences in marital satisfaction outcomes in the two independent samples being tested in this study. I obtained permission to use the scale through email correspondence with Dr. Dean M. Busby, the developer of the test (see Appendix D).

NSSS-S. The New Sexual Satisfaction Scale-Short Form (see Appendix E) is a 12-item measure of sexual satisfaction in couples (Mark, Herbenick, Fortenberry, Sanders, & Reece, 2014). When developing the NSSS, its creators conceptualized sexual satisfaction with a focus on individual satisfaction, interpersonal interaction between partners, and specific behaviors that lead to satisfaction. Five dimensions on the NSSS are: (a) sexual sensations, (b) sexual presence and awareness, (c) sexual exchange, (d)

emotional connection, and (e) sexual activity. I obtained permission to use the NSSS from the publisher through email correspondence (see Appendix F).

The NSSS was constructed and validated through the use of seven independent samples with over 2,000 participants between ages 18-55 in Croatia and the United States (Stulhofer, Busko, & Brouillard, 2009). Internal consistency in samples in both the United States and Croatia were similar ($\alpha = .90$ to $\alpha = .93$). Internal consistency remained similar for those in a relationship or those who were single (Mark et al., 2014). Scale reliability ($k = 20$) was also found to be similar among all samples. Scoring is based on the total sum of responses on Likert-style scored items.

The NSSS was developed to be useful for individuals of different sexual orientations, gender, cultural backgrounds, and relationship statuses (Mark et al., 2014). This study sought to examine multiple facets of sexual satisfaction with a unique population that has not yet been studied in the past. The NSSS emphasizes multiple dimensions of sexual satisfaction, as opposed to serving as a global index of sexual satisfaction. This provides the researcher with information about couples' ratings of sexual satisfaction in multiple functional areas of sexual satisfaction, congruent with the goals of the study. Permission to utilize the scale was obtained through email correspondence with Dr. Alexander Stulhofer, who was the developer of the test (see Appendix G).

STLS. Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale (see Appendix H) is a 45-item measuring intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment (Cassepp-Borges & Pasquali, 2012). Items are evaluated via a Likert-type scale, where 1 stands for "not at all," 5

stands for “*moderately*,” and 9 stands for “*extremely*.” The instrument was developed based on Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of love, where intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment each represent a vertex. The vertices combine to form a triangle, explaining the concept of love. Intimacy involves closeness in a relationship. Passion involves physical and sexual attraction, romance, and excitement. Decision/commitment involves the desire to love and be loved, and develop the relationship in the long term. Permission to utilize the scale was obtained through email correspondence with Dr. Robert Sternberg, who is the developer of the test (see Appendix H).

The subscale internal consistency analysis revealed reliabilities of the STLS to be in the .80 and .90 range, and the overall scale reliabilities were in the high .90 range (Sternberg, 1997). This demonstrates high reliability. External validation demonstrated that the three subscales correlate highly with satisfaction ratings.

Scores of emotional satisfaction are separated into three components of marital satisfaction, including (a) intimacy, (b) passion, and (c) commitment (Sternberg, 1997). Scoring is based on the total sum of responses on Likert-style scored items. Intimacy refers to the feelings that create warmth, closeness, and connection in a marital relationship. Passion refers to the needs and drives that contribute to romance, physical attraction, sexual activity, self-esteem, nurturance, dominance, submission, and self-actualization. Commitment refers to the decision in the short-term that a partner loves the other, and the decision in the long-term to maintain the love in the relationship.

Research Questions

RQ1. Based on the results of marital satisfaction surveys, are there significant mean differences on the consensus ratings on the RDAS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀1. There will be no significant mean differences in the consensus ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a1. There will be significant mean differences in the consensus ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ2. Based on the results of marital satisfaction surveys, are there significant mean differences on the satisfaction ratings on the RDAS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀2. There will be no significant mean differences in the satisfaction ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a2. There will be significant mean differences in the satisfaction ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ3. Based on the results of marital satisfaction surveys, are there significant mean differences on the cohesion ratings on the RDAS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀3. There will be no significant mean differences in the cohesion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a3. There will be significant mean differences in the cohesion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ4. Based on the results of an emotional satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences in the intimacy ratings on the STLS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀4. There will be no significant mean differences in the intimacy ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a4. There will be significant mean differences in the intimacy ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ5. Based on the results of an emotional satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences on the passion ratings on the STLS between male and

female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀₅. There will be no significant mean differences in the passion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_{a5}. There will be significant mean differences in the passion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ6. Based on the results of an emotional satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences on the commitment ratings on the STLS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀₆. There will be no significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_{a6}. There will be significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ7. Based on the results of a sexual satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences in the sexual satisfaction ratings on the NSSS-S between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀7. There will be no significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a7. There will be significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

Data Analysis Plan

The instruments were hand scored and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 was utilized for data analysis. A MANOVA was run for gender and *baal teshuva* group affiliation for each of the sub-scores of the RDAS. A two-factor ANOVA was run for gender and *baal teshuva* group affiliation for the scores of the STLS and NSSS. Descriptive statistics included a discussion of group statistics of each sample and results of the MANOVA and ANOVAs conducted. Significant overall *F* score on MANOVA's and on ANOVAs in all groups, if found to be significant, would negate null hypothesis and provide evidence supporting the overall hypothesis that there are differences in satisfaction ratings in the four groups of *baal teshuv*as.

Threats to Validity

Internal Validity

Internal reliability of the instrument may have an effect on the internal validity of the experiment. This was analyzed using Cronbach's alpha, which is most commonly used for a test or survey with multiple Likert-style questions that form a scale (Laerd, 2013a). Acceptable values of alpha generally range from .70 to .95, with a maximum

value of .90 recommended (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Higher degrees of alpha generally indicate higher levels of internal consistency on test items on instruments used.

Different circumstances or stressors may have arrived in the test takers' life situations that may have affected participants' response. This may have skewed the results of the entire sample as a result. These were direct and unavoidable threats to the internal validity of test results of the study.

External Validity

Demographics may have affected the external validity of the test results. For example, individuals residing in different geographic areas or from different educational, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds, may have interpreted test questions very differently from one another. This may have had a significant effect on the outcome of the data.

Although test takers remained anonymous when results were analyzed, there was a possibility that participants may have been aware of neighbors or friends in the community also participating in the study. This may have posed a threat to external validity. Potential participants may have discussed test questions with one another and thus biased one another's responses.

Finally, specificity of the independent variable may have posed a threat to external validity. A couple may have identified themselves as *baal teshuv*s who did or did not strictly adhere to the Jewish laws of family purity; however, there may have been minor or significant differences in how strictly different couples did or did not adhere to

the laws if they did identify as adhering to the laws. This may have potentially biased satisfaction ratings in all areas being measured.

Construct Validity

Construct validity of the instruments themselves may also have affected the outcome of the test results. The most updated and recent version of each instrument was utilized for this study to minimize this problem. Earlier test versions may not have the same degree of reliability and validity as newer versions.

Ethical Considerations

An application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval # 02-09-17-0059596) at Walden University was completed to ensure that all facets of the study were in compliance with the university's ethical standards, with U.S. federal regulations, and international guidelines. Letters of cooperation were provided to community partners such as local mental health clinics, libraries, and community circulars. These partners were asked to help distribute advertisements to communities to recruit participants for this study. The letters documented the partners' understanding of the purpose of the study and willingness to facilitate the process.

Informed consent was provided to participants outlining the following: (a) no confidential information such as participants' educational or medical records would be disclosed to the researcher during this study, (b) there was a minimal or moderate risk of psychological distress owing to the sensitive nature of some survey items, and participants could choose not to answer certain survey items or to withdraw from the study at any time, (c) participants' personal information would be locked in a file cabinet

and kept separate from survey data so participants cannot be identified, (d) only the researcher would have access to the survey data, (e) survey data would be kept in a password protected folder on the researcher's computer, (f) all survey data would be kept anonymous on the researcher's computer, (g) the researcher's contact information would be provided in case participants would like the results of the data, and (h) participants would receive both the supervisor and researcher's contact information should participants have questions or concerns.

Summary

This quantitative study was designed to examine differences in marital, emotional, and sexual satisfaction ratings in two groups of *baal teshuvras*, including a group who strictly observed the laws of family purity and a group who did not strictly observe the laws of family purity. The study utilized the quasi-experimental design. This design was appropriate since participants were non-randomly assigned into each of the four groups in the study (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). Design choice enabled utilizing the same respondents to provide responses on one of each of the three areas under investigation, including marital, sexual, and emotional satisfaction scores, thus increasing the likelihood of consistency across response items.

Participants were recruited from several large, well-established Orthodox Jewish communities in the Northeastern section of the United States. Permission was requested from local mental health centers and libraries in selected communities, to post advertisements when recruiting participants (see Appendix A). Participants filled out a one-page questionnaire on the following criteria: (a) age, (b) geographic location of

residence including address, (c) number of years married, (d) number of children in household, if any, (d) age and gender of each participant, (e) identification as religious from birth or *baal teshuva*, and (f) rating of observance of laws of family purity as either strict, moderately strict, minimally strict, or do not observe. From this information, applicants who met criteria for inclusion in the study were selected and placed into one of the two independent variable groups. Those participants who were selected received a packet with detailed informed consent discussing the purpose of the study, procedures, and participants' rights, in addition to copies of the instruments utilized for the study.

The independent variables of the study were inclusion into one of two groups: *baal teshuvras* who strictly adhered to the laws of family purity or *baal teshuvras* who did not adhere to these laws, and gender. A MANOVA and 2-factor ANOVAs were conducted where appropriate, to compare differences and main effect among the DVs and IVs. The chapter detailed how this study was executed, including the purpose of the study, research questions, and hypotheses. In addition to discussing methods of data collection, the research design, and plan of data analysis, this chapter provided an in-depth description of the instruments which were employed to retrieve desired data, the operationalization of measurable constructs, threats to internal and external validity, and ethical considerations.

Major ethical considerations were outlined by the Walden University IRB guidelines. This study provided preliminary data for a population that had not previously been studied. The results of this study will be made available to other professionals in

the field of psychology, with the hopes of advancing further research with the target population. Results of the study will be discussed at length in chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore differences in marital satisfaction scores among male and female *baal teshuvras* observing Jewish family purity laws strictly, moderately strictly, minimally strictly, or not at all. I used a quantitative approach. The independent variables included gender and levels of observance of the laws of family purity. The dependent variables included scores on the marital satisfaction tests used, including the RDAS, NSSS, and STLS. Scores on subscales of the RDAS and STLS were examined separately. I analyzed the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1. Based on the results of marital satisfaction surveys, are there significant mean differences on the consensus ratings on the RDAS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀1. There will be no significant mean differences in the consensus ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a1. There will be significant mean differences in the consensus ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ2. Based on the results of marital satisfaction surveys, are there significant mean differences on the satisfaction ratings on the RDAS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀2. There will be no significant mean differences in the satisfaction ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a2. There will be significant mean differences in the satisfaction ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ3. Based on the results of marital satisfaction surveys, are there significant mean differences on the cohesion ratings on the RDAS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀3. There will be no significant mean differences in the cohesion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a3. There will be significant mean differences in the cohesion ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ4. Based on the results of an emotional satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences in the intimacy ratings on the STLS between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀4. There will be no significant mean differences in the intimacy ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a4. There will be significant mean differences in the intimacy ratings between male and female *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ5. Based on the results of an emotional satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences on the passion ratings on the STLS between male and female *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀5. There will be no significant mean differences in the passion ratings between male and female *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

H_a5. There will be significant mean differences in the passion ratings between male and female *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ6. Based on the results of an emotional satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences on the commitment ratings on the STLS between male and female *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H₀6. There will be no significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuv*as who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

Ha6. There will be significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

RQ7. Based on the results of a sexual satisfaction survey, are there significant mean differences in the sexual satisfaction ratings on the NSSS-S between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not?

H07. There will be no significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

Ha7. There will be significant mean differences in the commitment ratings between male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and those who do not.

The following is included in this chapter: data collection methods, timeframe for data collection, methods for recruiting participants that were used, actual response rates of potential participants, any departures from data collection methods discussed in Chapter 3, demographic characteristics of the sample, and representativeness of the sample. I then describe the results of the data in detail, including a report of the descriptive statistics that characterize the sample, an evaluation of whether the sample data met statistical assumptions for MANOVAs and two-factor ANOVAs performed, and a detailed report of statistical analytical findings (organized by research questions and hypotheses) including exact statistics and probability findings, confidence intervals as

appropriate, and effect sizes as appropriate. Results of post-hoc analyses are reported, when appropriate, and I have included several tables and figures to illustrate results. The chapter then concludes with a summary of answers to the research questions and with a transitional presentation of the findings into an introduction to the next chapter.

Data Collection

The Walden IRB approved this study on February 9, 2017. From February 13, 2017, to April 30, 2017, I posted an invitation to my study on the Facebook group Jewish Women Talk About Anything. I also requested permission to place pre-approved fliers to recruit participants for my study in local libraries, medical centers, and therapy clinics in my community. I requested assistance from friends and people I knew who live in other communities to place fliers in community partners in their neighborhoods as well. I included my contact information on both the fliers and on the Facebook invitation post. Between February 13 and April 30, 2017, 82 people responded to me either indicating they were interested in participating in the study, or requesting more information before they would consider participating. They responded to me mainly via email, text, or Facebook Instant Messenger. I determined that approximately 60 people who filled out the participant screen were appropriate candidates for the study. I mailed them packets with the surveys, informed consent, and stamped self-addressed return envelopes. I received completed surveys back from 46 participants.

The initial sample of 46 participants included 11 males and 35 females. I discovered that recruiting a larger number of participants was difficult during the recruitment process. The nature of the research topic was considered sensitive to the

target population. Religious institutions, community, and health facilities were unable to post fliers because of concern that the topic would be offensive to the Orthodox Jewish community. These facilities informed me that culturally, many people in the Orthodox community regard marital affairs as extremely private. Discussion of these issues is considered a breach of modesty and an invasion of privacy. They regretfully declined to assist me in advertising within the community for participants for the study.

In June 2017, my dissertation committee determined that it was necessary to continue attempting to recruit more participants for the study. There was a very wide gap between the number and male and female participants in the original sample of 47 participants. The committee stated that because of this gap and the small size of the overall sample, the results could not reliably answer the research questions. A larger sample with a smaller gap size between male and female participants was necessary to increase the reliability of the data analysis.

One of the factors I considered when attempting to devise alternative recruitment methods was that the stigma of participating in sensitive research and unwanted attention participation could bring to participants' immediate families and extended relatives often prevent people in sensitive populations from participating (Timraz et al., 2016). Many participants who had originally responded to the advertisements on Facebook provided feedback that assisted me in determining new methods of recruitment. One of the concerns mentioned by the potential participants was the lack of anonymity and time commitments the original recruitment method entailed. They suggested placing the surveys online onto a site such as SurveyMonkey.com, posting on more Facebook

groups, and posting on Yahoo Groups for different Orthodox Jewish communities in the northeastern United States. In addition, many of the original participants asked friends and relatives to participate upon my request. This method of snowballing, in which referrals are made within a group of people who know one another and is an ascending sampling method, is often effective when working with sensitive populations on a sensitive topic (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997) but proved to be only mildly productive during the recruitment process.

I used several suggestions from the dissertation committee and from Facebook participants for additional recruitment procedures that proved the most successful. I transferred the participant screen and surveys onto SurveyMonkey.com. I then researched and created a list of additional Facebook and Yahoo groups that contained potential participants of the target population, and posted a detailed explanation of the study, invitation to the study, and links to the surveys on SurveyMonkey.com. Changes to the original informed consent form and flier, which had been originally approved by the IRB, were sent to and approved by the IRB. The IRB also approved text that would be sent in the email to all future participants, explaining the change of procedure from the original data recruitment procedure and purpose for the change. The email included an attachment of the amended informed consent as well.

The new procedures proved effective. Through the use of the social media sites, 100 people responded to the surveys. Fifty-seven of these additional filled out surveys were able to be utilized and added to the original sample of 46 participants. The remaining 43 surveys could not be used because they were not filled out completely.

Initially, most interested participants were from the West Coast, Canada, and midwestern portions of the United States. Over time, I began to receive more inquiries from individuals from the northeastern section of the United States. Most of these individuals were either newly married with no children yet or married more than 10-15 years. Ages ranged from as young as 20 to people over the age of 50.

Results

Characteristics of the Sample

I calculated descriptive statistics for the following demographic variables: age range of participants in the study, the total number of male versus female participants, level of observance of family purity laws (ranging from strict to moderately or minimally strict, or does not observe), and number of years married. G*Power (version 3.1.9.2) was used to calculate the desired sample size, based on a medium effect size (f) and standard alpha and power ($f^2 = .05$, alpha = .05, and power = .80), $n = 108$. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Sample

Variable name	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Males	44	42.7%
	Females	59	57.2%
Number of years married	0-5 years	34	33.0%
	6 years or more	69	67.0%
Observance level (males)	Strict	23	52.3%
	Not strict	21	47.7%
Observance level (females)	Strict	24	40.7%
	Not strict	35	59.3%

Note. While number of children was asked in the survey, not all participants were couples, and some did not answer that question. There is, therefore, no way to determine appropriate percentages or numbers regarding number of children.

MANOVAs

I conducted two-factor MANOVAs to address the research questions for RDAS and STLS scores to determine differences on marital test scores among the independent variables: gender and level of observance of the laws of family purity. The two-factor MANOVA was initially selected as the optimal choice for marital and emotional satisfaction scores owing to the multiple dependent variables that were likely moderately correlated. In addition, MANOVA protects against Type I errors that might occur if multiple ANOVAs had been conducted. The overall significance of the MANOVA enables examination of univariate F tests for each dependent variable to investigate which dependent variables may contribute to the overall significant effect.

Multicollinearity. In MANOVA, multicollinearity occurs when there is a high correlation between dependent variables. When there is a high correlation between dependent variables, one dependent variable becomes a near-linear combination of the other two dependent variables causing suspicion and redundancy to include these combinations (French, Macedo, Poulson, Waterson, & Yu, 2008). I performed Pearson correlations between the dependent variables to test for multicollinearity. Pearson correlations between .30 and .70 are considered acceptable for a MANOVA to be performed (Maxwell, 2001). The correlations between the subscores for RDAS indicated that MANOVA was appropriate, suggesting adequate collinearity among the variables. The correlations between the subscores for the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale indicated that performing a MANOVA would not be appropriate because they were over .70. Two techniques have been suggested in the literature to fix the problem of multicollinearity among highly correlated variables. In surveys with several subscores with a problem with high correlation among the subscores, the problem of multicollinearity can be fixed by adding all the subscores into one composite score for each participant in the sample (Olivia & Ilie, 2013). Another technique that has been suggested when dependent variables are highly correlated is to utilize Roy's largest root to interpret the data instead of Wilk's lambda since Roy's largest root has the greatest statistical power when dependent variables are highly correlated (Huberty & Olejnik, 2006). I deemed a factorial ANOVA appropriate for results of the STLS by combining the subscale scores into one overall composite score. Results of the Pearson correlations are listed in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2

Pearson Correlations Between RDAS Subtest Scores

	1	2	3
1.Consensus	—		
2.Satisfaction	.660*	—	
3.Cohesion	.650*	.631*	—

*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3

Pearson Correlations Between STLS Subtest Scores

	1	2	3
1.Intimacy	—		
2.Passion	.865*	—	
3.Commitment	.909*	.874*	—

*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Outliers. Mahalanobis distance values were determined to detect the presence of any outliers in the data for the RDAS scores. The presence of outliers violates an assumption of MANOVAs, which states that there should not be outliers for the MANOVA to be considered reliable (Grande, 2015). According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2012), 24.21 is a critical value for Mahalanobis values. Any Mahalanobis values above 24.21 in the data set should be ruled out as outliers. The maximum Mahalanobis value found in the data for the MANOVA for RDAS was 20.445. Thus, I ruled out the presence of outliers for the RDAS MANOVA.

Normality. The data from the dependent variables should ideally be normally distributed for MANOVA. Lack of a normal distribution violates another assumption

required for a MANOVA to be considered accurate (Laerd, 2013). The assumption of normality was checked using tests of normality on the SPSS software and checking Shapiro-Wilk values for significance. The results indicated significance for the scores on all RDAS subtests, ($p < .05$), meaning that the assumption was not met for the RDAS subtests.

According to Cramer and Howitt (2004), a skew ratio value equal to or greater than 1.96, where skewness is divided by the standard error of skewness, is considered a statistically significant skew. This ratio value was -5.82, -4.89, and -1.82 for RDAS subtests 1, 2, and 3, respectively. The MANOVA design can still be utilized in instances of non-normality, as long as the non-normality is caused by skewness and not by outliers (French et al., 2008).

Homogeneity of variance. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested with Levene's test for each of the dependent variables. Homogeneity of variance assumes that the dependent variables exhibit equal levels of variance, and if they are different from each other, one cannot calculate an error variance and get an estimate of within-group variance (French et al., 2008). A significance of .05 or below indicates that the homogeneity of variances was not met (Grande, 2015). The test revealed no significance for RDAS subtests 1 and 3 at the $p < .05$ level, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met for these two subtests. However, a significant value for RDAS subtest 2 at the $p > .05$ level was found, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated for this subtest.

Results of the MANOVAs.

The MANOVA was conducted to detect significant differences on marital satisfaction subtest scores on the RDAS subtest scores between male *baal teshuvas* who observe the law of family purity strictly, male *baal teshuvas* who do not observe the laws of family purity strictly, female *baal teshuvas* who strictly observe the laws of family purity, and female *baal teshuvas* who do not strictly observe the laws of family purity.

The results for the main effect of gender were found to be statistically insignificant, Pillai's trace = .061, $F(3,97) = 2.114$, $p > .05$. Multivariate effect size was $\eta^2 = .061$, which is a medium effect size. The results for the main effect of observance was found to be statistically insignificant, Pillai's Trace = .004, $F(3,97) = .143$, $p > .05$. Multivariate effect size was $\eta^2 = .004$, which is a small effect size. The results for interaction between gender and observance was found to be statistically insignificant, Pillai's Trace = .06, $F(3,97) = 2.062$, $p > .05$. Multivariate effect size was $\eta^2 = .06$, which is a medium effect size. The means and standard deviations for each group are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for RDAS

RDAS Subtest	Gender	Observance	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Consensus	Male	Strict	18.83	7.77
		Not Strict	19.29	7.77
	Female	Strict	22.42	6.13
		Not Strict	21.43	5.63
Satisfaction	Male	Strict	12.22	6.18
		Not Strict	11.24	5.80
	Female	Strict	13.50	4.65
		Not Strict	15.03	4.27
Cohesion	Male	Strict	10.09	4.36
		Not Strict	8.95	4.34
	Female	Strict	10.54	3.20
		Not Strict	11.26	4.42

Use of Two-Way ANOVAs

To address the research questions for NSSS scores and Sternberg Triangular Love Scale composite scores, two-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences on test scores among females and males observing the laws of family purity strictly and not strictly. The two-way ANOVA was the optimal choice because it compares the means between 2 groups on the same continuous dependent variable (Laerd, 2013). Since one overall composite score for RDAS and STLS was utilized from each test, the multiple dependent variables were not involved and thus use of the MANOVA was not warranted to analyze the data statistically.

Normal distribution. The data from the dependent variables should ideally be normally distributed for two-way ANOVAs. Lack of a normal distribution violates an assumption of accuracy for 2-Factor ANOVAs (Laerd, 2013). The assumption of normality was checked using tests of normality on the SPSS software and checking Shapiro-Wilk values for significance. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk values on the NSSS indicated no significance for the scores ($p < .05$) across most levels of the independent variables, with the exception of females who did not observe laws of family purity strictly and males who observe the laws strictly. The results of all Shapiro-Wilk values for the STLS were significant. A significant result indicates that the assumption of normality was not met for these variables. The value of the ratio of skewness divided by the standard error of skewness was -1.93 and -6.89 for NSSS and STLS, respectively. According to Grande (2014), the two-way ANOVA design can still be utilized despite problems with normality within the data.

Homogeneity of variance. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested with Levene's test for each of the dependent variables. Homogeneity of variance assumes that the dependent variables exhibit equal levels of variance, and if they are different from each other, one cannot calculate an error variance and get an estimate of within-group variance. A significance of .05 or below indicates that the homogeneity of variances was not met (Grande, 2015). Levene's test was not significant for both the STLS and the NSSS, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met for the two-factor ANOVAs, for both tests.

Results of the Two-Way ANOVAs

Two-way ANOVAs were conducted to compare the main effects of gender and levels of observance of laws of family purity and the interaction effect between gender and levels of observance of laws of family purity on NSSS and STLS composite scores. All effects for NSSS scores were not significant at the .05 significance level, with the exception of gender. All effects for STLS scores were not significant at the .05 level.

The main effect for gender on the NSSS yielded an F ratio of $F(1,99) = 7.583, p = .007$, indicating a statistically significant difference between males who observe the laws strictly and not strictly versus females who observe the laws strictly and not strictly. The main effect for observance level on the NSSS yielded an F ratio of $F(1, 99) = 2.126, p = .148$, indicated a statistically insignificant difference between males who observe the laws strictly and not strictly versus females who observe the laws strictly versus not strictly. The interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 99) = 2.244, p < .137$.

The main effect for gender on the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale yielded an F ratio of $F(1, 99) = 1.875, p = .174$, indicating a statistically insignificant difference between males who observe the laws strictly and not strictly versus females who observe the laws strictly and not strictly. The main effect for observance level on the STLS yielded an F ratio of $F(1, 99) = .012, p = .911$, indicated a statistically insignificant difference between males who observe the laws strictly and not strictly versus females who observe the laws strictly versus not strictly. The interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 99) = .135, p = .714$. Summary tables for the results of the two-way ANOVAs are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 5

Two-Way Analysis of Variance for Marital Satisfaction Scores on the STLS by Level of Observance of the Laws of Family Purity

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Main effect gender	20420	1	20420	1.87	.174
Main effect observance	136	1	136	0.01	.911
Gender*observance	1470	1	1470	0.14	.714
Error	1078214	99	10891		
Total	11506482	103			

Table 6

Two-Way Analysis of Variance for Sexual Satisfaction Scores on the NSSS by Level of Observance of the Laws of Family Purity

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Main effect gender	3683	1	3683	7.583	.007
Main effect observance	1032	1	1032	2.126	.148
Gender*observance	1090	1	1090	2.244	.137
Error	48087	99	485		
Total	491190	103			

The means and standard deviations for all groups are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

*Means and Standard Deviations for NSSS** and STLS*

Test	Gender	Observance Level	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
NSSS	Male	Strict	64.61*	24.71
		Not Strict	51.52*	23.59
	Female	Strict	70.71*	9.58
		Not Strict	70.34*	20.80
Sternberg	Male	Strict	306.04	113.37
		Not Strict	296.00	123.16
	Female	Strict	327.04	98.21
		Not Strict	332.40	89.15

*Means are significant. **NSSS is the New Sexual Satisfaction Survey, which provides a measure of satisfaction in married couples. The STLS provides a measure of emotional satisfaction.

Summary

This study was a quantitative design used to investigate differences in satisfaction scores on the RDAS, Sternberg Triangular Love Scale, and the NSSS among *baal teshuva* males and females who keep the ancient Jewish laws of family purity strictly, moderately strictly, minimally strictly, or not at all. MANOVAs were initially selected to determine whether there were significant differences between gender, level of observance of the laws of family purity, and marital satisfaction survey scores on the RDAS and STLS. The MANOVAs were selected as the optimal choice to assess scores on the RDAS and STLS because of the multiple dependent variables created by the different subscale scores. However, owing to high correlations between dependent variables on the STLS, MANOVA was only utilized for RDAS. After a thorough review of the

literature, it was determined that calculating an overall composite score for the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale and performing a two-factor ANOVA was the most appropriate alternative method for analyzing the data for this test. Overall results of the MANOVA for the RDAS indicated a significant difference for the main effect of gender on test scores; however, there were no significant differences in survey scores on the main effects of observance levels or the interactive effect of gender and two-factor ANOVAS were utilized to determine whether there were significant differences in sexual satisfaction scores on the NSSS and composite scores on the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale. All effects for NSSS scores were not significant at the .05 significance level, with the exception of gender. All effects for Sternberg Triangular Love Scale scores were not significant at the .05 level.

The next chapter will elaborate on the findings of the study presented in this chapter. Interpretations of the findings will be discussed, particularly how this study confirms, disconfirms, or extends knowledge in the discipline by comparing them with what has been found in the peer-reviewed literature. Limitations this study presented, particularly to generalizability, trustworthiness, validity, and reliability that arose from the execution of the study, will be detailed. Recommendations for further research, replicability, and extending upon this study will be outlined. Implications of the potential effect for positive social change at the appropriate level and recommendations for the ability of this study to contribute to professional practice will be pointed out.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there was an interaction between marital satisfaction scores and observance of the laws of family purity. The three scales I used included the RDAS, the STLS, and the NSSS. The independent variables included gender and level of observance of the laws of family purity. The dependent variable was rated survey scores in marital, sexual, and emotional satisfaction.

Initially, I sent copies of the surveys to prospective participants in the mail with self-addressed stamped envelopes to be returned anonymously. At a later point in the data collection process, I placed the surveys online at SurveyMonkey so participants could directly access the surveys. I made this change to increase the number of participants in the sample because many potential participants stated they would be willing to participate only if the surveys were in an online format. They expressed concern with preserving anonymity with the original method of filling out and sending back forms that were mailed to their homes. During the initial phase of the data collection process, 82 people responded. Sixty of these initial respondents were appropriate candidates for the study based on their responses to the participant screen. I received 46 surveys back from these 60 respondents. During the second phase of the data collection process, 100 people responded to the surveys when they were placed online. I used 57 of these surveys for the data sample, while the remaining 43 could not be used because they were incompletely filled out. There were 103 participants in the total sample, including 44 males and 59 females.

Pearson correlations I conducted for the RDAS and Sternberg Triangular Love Scale tests indicated that the MANOVA method would be appropriate for the RDAS, but not for the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale. The correlations for the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale scores indicated that the MANOVA would be inappropriate because the correlations were over the acceptable range of .30 to .70 (Maxwell, 2001). Two-factor ANOVAs were instead conducted for the NSSS and composite Sternberg Triangular Love Scale scores.

MANOVA results for the RDAS subtest scores indicated no significance of the main effect of gender, level of observance, or the interactive effect between gender and level of observance on the test scores. A two-factor ANOVA for the composite Sternberg Triangular Love Scale scores indicated that there was no significance of the main effect of gender, level of observance, or the interactive effect between gender and level of observance on the test scores. The two-factor ANOVA results for the NSSS scores indicated a statistically significant difference of the main effect of gender on test scores, but statistically insignificant differences of the main effect of level observance or the interactive effect of gender and level of observance. Demographic factors could not be potentially linked to the results of the MANOVA or two-factor ANOVAs because of anonymity issues and my inability to know who filled out which survey.

Interpretation of the Findings

Comparison of Results to the Peer-Reviewed Literature

The results of the current study found no statistically significant differences in marital satisfaction scores on the RDAS and Sternberg Triangular Love Scale between

male and female *baal teshuvras* who strictly observe the laws of family purity and male and female *baal teshuvras* who do not strictly observe the laws of family purity. The findings support the work of Schnall et al. (2013) discussed in Chapter 2, which showed that overall, marital satisfaction scores of *baal teshuvras* was only slightly lower than other groups included within the original heterogeneous sample of Orthodox Jews of both *baal teshuvras* and individuals raised religious from birth. These findings also extend the work of Ackerman (2005), whose work with a homogeneous sample of both *baal teshuvras* and people raised religious from birth showed no statistically significant difference between marital satisfaction and levels of observance of the laws of family purity. The findings in my study also extend Ackerman's research on marital satisfaction and mental well-being within Orthodox Jewish marriages by focusing solely on *baal teshuvras*. No studies have been conducted to investigate whether strict adherence to the family purity laws among the newly religious contributes to marital harmony or adds additional stress.

I also found a significant difference in the effects of gender on sexual satisfaction scores on the NSSS. This finding extends empirical evidence that while both men and women agree that sex is important to the health of a marriage, married men and women often experience significant differences in sexual desire and sexual satisfaction within their marriages (Elliott & Umberson, 2008). This finding also supports past research that has indicated that sexual satisfaction is an increasingly important area of study, especially owing to significant gender differences in sexual satisfaction among married couples (Ashdown, Hackathorn, & Clark, 2011).

The results of this study added to an area of need in research investigating the relationship between mental health, marital satisfaction, spirituality, and religiosity among religious groups that have not been well-studied and represented in these areas of study (Rusu & Turliuc, 2011). This study added to this area of need in research through focusing on marital satisfaction among Orthodox Jews, a group largely under-represented in research. The research also extends earlier findings by investigating how observance of the laws of family purity, a largely not well-known group of laws with a special structure regulating sexual activity between husbands and wives, may affect marital satisfaction. The psychological benefits of strict adherence to the family purity laws have been pointed out in the past (Berkowitz, 2008), though no studies have been conducted focusing specifically on newly religious couples. While the statistically significant difference in sexual satisfaction among male and female *baal teshuva* responders supports the findings of Schnall et al. (2013) that problems with physical intimacy can contribute to marital discord among *baal teshuv*as, the results also extend some of the findings in the literature that have shown the benefits of practices similar to the laws of family purity, such as nonsexual communication during a period of abstinence, which may prevent sexual boredom (Berkowitz, 2008). The findings also support the practice of a growing number of marriage and sex therapists working with the general population who have begun recommending periods of sexual separation to help decrease sexual boredom among couples. These findings largely support the evidence in the peer-reviewed literature explored in Chapter 2, showing a generally positive association

between mental health, marital satisfaction, spirituality, and religiosity among religious groups.

Relevance to Theoretical Framework

The literature has shown evidence of a direct association between individual religiosity and marital satisfaction and positive interaction between an individual's relationship with G-d and couples' joint religious communication (Prabu & Stafford, 2015). *Baal teshuv*'s choice of a spiritual and religious lifestyle demonstrates their desire to sanctify their marriage and willingness to abide by the laws of family purity because of strong religious conviction (Friedman et al., 2009). The statistically insignificant differences in marital satisfaction scores on the RDAS and Sternberg Triangular Love Scale extend Mahoney's sanctification of marriage framework, which originates from RCT and relational spirituality concepts. The results demonstrate how religious values help couples share mutual perspectives and work together to navigate normal problems that come up in marriage, and how they can be used as guidelines in the activities of marriage including sexual relations, gender roles, and self-sacrifice.

The statistically significant differences between genders in sexual satisfaction scores had implications that support RCT and relational spirituality concepts. RCT takes into account forces such as power, culture, and gender that can complicate connection between married partners (Vogel, 2007). Specifically, it accounts for relational disconnections caused by imbalances in power within relationships, which prevent people from experiencing mutual empathy, empowerment, and authenticity in relationships (Brady et al., 2013). These forces may partially explain the significant differences found

between gender scores in sexual satisfaction. Interestingly, the differences in sexual satisfaction were only found between genders, and not between levels of observance of the laws of family purity. Relational spiritual theory discusses situations where the search for the sacred or divine is intertwined within the search and development of human relationships (Mahoney, 2013). Level of observance of the laws of family purity did not appear to affect sexual satisfaction scores, while the opposite was true for gender. Gender differences in sexual satisfaction, according to the peer-reviewed literature, is a phenomenon common in long-term marriage across cultures and not a finding unique to *baal teshuvras* (Elliott & Umberson, 2008). Thus, the results of the study lend credence to concepts of relational spirituality as well as RCT. Perhaps the search for the divine or sacred within marriage, particularly guided by an ancient practice such as the laws of family purity, has a protective effect on marital satisfaction that has yet to be fully understood.

Limitations of the Study

The data collection process itself led to several difficulties with the internal validity of the overall sample. I collected the sample mainly via use of social media and word of mouth, and I relied on the respondents to provide truthful answers to the survey questions. When the surveys were placed online, there was a possibility that individuals may have put in multiple entries, which could seriously affect the internal validity of the statistical analysis of the data. Motivation was also another important factor to consider. No tangible monetary reward was offered for participation in this study. All respondents participated voluntarily. Responses may have been affected by motivational factors, such

as rushing through their answers because of lack of interest, not supplying completely accurate answers because of lack of interest, or exaggerating their answers because of zealotry.

Since all survey results were returned anonymously, it was impossible to know which respondent had responded to each survey. The only identifying information available on the surveys was the respondent's gender and level of observance of the laws of family purity. Some demographic information from the participant screen was available, including number of years married, number of children, the gender of the potential participant, and the participant's age. Most respondents were only one spouse within a couple. Couples' views on marital satisfaction could thus not be obtained.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a critical need to investigate the marital stressors in Orthodox Jewish subgroups. Problems with physical intimacy/sexuality and emotional satisfaction have been shown to be major areas contributing to marital discord in the *baal teshuva* population (Schnall et al., 2013). Research with the newly religious is particularly lacking. This is of concern, since the newly religious are at increased risk of psychosocial dysfunction as opposed to other groups within Orthodox Jewish communities (Schnall, 2006). This study was restricted to only the *baal teshuva* sector of Orthodox Jewish communities in North America, and particularly in the Northeast. Accessing appropriate participants for this study who met selection criteria was accomplished through reliance on the snowballing method with earlier participants or via social media. As a result, there were representatives of the *baal teshuva* population, such

as those in Hassidic or ultra-orthodox sectors, who did not have the opportunity to participate in this study and share their perspective on the topic of study within the survey data results. Replicating this study with a much larger and more geographically diverse sample would extend the findings from the still very limited amount of research that has been done on the topic of marital satisfaction and observance of the laws of family purity. In addition, including perspectives of other groups of *baal teshuv*as in future research can potentially increase the scope of knowledge available about the *baal teshuva* population that this study was unable to provide. Including perspectives of *baal teshuv*as from diverse geographic backgrounds and cultural observances can be achieved in one of several methods. Organizations with access to more difficult to reach groups within Orthodox Jewish communities such as professional research groups, can be contacted to assist in the process of recruiting volunteers who have willingly participated in previous research studies. Financial incentives for participating in research can be included in advertisements posted in local community circulars; because this might be a motivating factor for some to participate. Individuals who have worked with orthodox communities while completing their dissertations can be contacted because they may have mailing lists of participants from their research interested in participating in future research endeavors that may benefit Orthodox Jewish communities. Finally, the researcher can reach out to local Modern Orthodox families and community leaders who have family members in ultra-orthodox streams of observance. Family members may better be able to convince their relatives of the benefits of participating in research, as opposed to a stranger they are not acquainted with.

The results of this study can help practitioners working with *baal teshuvras* in one of several ways: (a) to understand the special challenges and stressors faced by this population, which affects overall emotional health and marital satisfaction; (b) how their marriages function similarly to and different from the religious from birth members of their community, and from marriages within the general population; and (c) to understand the affect practicing the laws of family purity may have on the health of *baal teshuva* marriages.

Religious leaders or community organizations may use the findings of this study to advocate for decreasing the stigma of seeking marital counseling among community members. Creating support groups and providing free educational speaking engagements to the community on the topic of how to create satisfaction within one's marriage can send a message to community members that there is help available and no shame in seeking out help to improve one's marriage. In addition, well-known outreach programs targeting the newly religious can offer free pre-marital counseling services to *baal teshuvras* who are engaged to be married to educate them ahead of time on how to be realistic and successful within their marriages.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study suggest that level of observance of the laws of family purity did not have a negative effect on marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction, but that gender differences may indicate differences in sexual satisfaction. These results may imply that the structure of the laws of family purity may have a generally protective effect on marital satisfaction. Increasing public awareness of the laws of family purity

and the results of this study can be accomplished via a presentation at professional conferences, inclusion in scholarly research journals or books, or public community lectures by the community or religious leaders. Increased awareness of the findings of this study and the laws of family purity has the potential to improve marital quality and marital satisfaction universally for individuals of all backgrounds and faiths. At an organizational level, mental health organizations can choose to provide training to their providers on the benefits of the laws of family purity, so that these methods can be provided to the organization's clientele. This may also improve provider morale and skill competency.

The Jewish laws of family purity are not a universally or well-known phenomenon. Aspects of the practice of the laws of family purity with those who are aware of it have been utilized in mental health practice with individuals outside of Orthodox Jewish communities. Berkowitz (2008) found that some of the major benefits of periods of sexual abstinence in marriage include encouraging nonsexual communication and preventing sexual boredom. Knowing this information, some marriage and sex therapists working with the general population have begun recommending periods of sexual separation to help decrease sexual boredom among couples. This research study expands the research that has been conducted in the past in the effort to provide additional information on a topic that is still not well understood. Psychologists, counselors, mental health professionals, religious leaders, and community leaders have the power to create positive change with the knowledge of the laws of family purity and the findings of this study. Sensitivity to the religious beliefs and

practices and the special challenges faced by the *baal teshuva* population investigated in this study is crucial as these factors played significant roles in the process and outcomes of this study. Practitioners and leaders have the ability to increase their understanding, awareness, and sensitivity to some of the issues that married people consider most private and difficult to speak about. They can use the findings of the study to convey this heightened awareness and sensitivity and provide new strategies, potentially based on the laws of family purity, to help create healing and establish trust with their clients.

There is still a stigma in society associated with seeking professional help. Oftentimes, couples who are struggling do not seek the help they need as a result. Religious people may be embarrassed to admit they are having difficulty creating marital harmony. Even if they do seek out help, they may be afraid of being negatively judged or discussing some of their most private issues openly with a virtual stranger. I would like to publish and present the findings of this dissertation at professional conferences and in community educational venues to help reduce the stigma of seeking professional help. I would like to do this to provide hope for married people that there are strategies that are not well known, based on the laws of family purity that can potentially dramatically improve the quality of their marriage with time and patience.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to investigate what the marital satisfaction scores were among male and female *baal teshuvras* who observe the laws of family purity strictly versus male and female *baal teshuvras* who do not observe the laws of family purity strictly. Concepts from RCT and Mahoney's sanctification of marriage frameworks were

incorporated to illustrate how the interaction between a positive interaction between an individual's relationship with G-d and couples' joint religious communication, are predictors of marital satisfaction. The key results of the study provided some evidence that there was a statistical significance by gender in the sexual satisfaction scores on the NSSS. There was no statistical significance in the main effect of level of observance of the laws of family purity or the interactive between the level of observance and gender on the NSSS. The findings support evidence in the empirically based literature while both men and women agree that sex is important to the health of a marriage, married men and women often experience significant differences in sexual desire and sexual satisfaction within their marriages (Elliott & Umberson, 2008).

Another important element of the findings of this study is that it reinforces indications from past research that studying sexual satisfaction in marriages is an increasingly important area of study, especially because of significant gender differences in sexual satisfaction among married couples (Ashdown et al., 2011). This study specifically focused on the marital satisfaction ratings of *baal teshuvahs*; however, it can be expanded to investigate whether the observance of the laws of family purity has a positive or negative predictive value for marital satisfaction within other populations.

While the results of the study did not demonstrate significant differences in marital and sexual satisfaction ratings among levels of observance of the laws of family purity or the interactive effect of levels of observance and gender, it is possible that these factors do play a larger role than what was seen in the sample in this study. During the recruitment process, many potential participants either decided not to participate in the

study or dropped out because the topic was highly sensitive, private, and uncomfortable for them. There is still a stigma in society, perhaps an increased amount particularly among religious people, for couples to admit they are having difficulty creating marital harmony and seeking the help they need. Even if they do seek out help, they may be afraid of being negatively judged or discussing some of their most private issues openly with a virtual stranger. These are important points to consider when looking at the outcomes of this study.

Decreasing the stigmas in society associated with seeking help for problems with marital harmony, perhaps particularly among religious people across cultures, is an important step in improving the quality of these marriages in our society. Heightened awareness in research of strategies that consistently work well, offers increased hope for those who need help. The laws of family purity are not a universally well-known phenomenon; however, aspects of the laws of family purity have been applied by some marriage and sex therapists working with the general population. They have begun recommending periods of sexual separation to help decrease sexual boredom among couples. Answers provided from future studies expanding on the work of this study can provide insight whether the strategies and procedures, based on the laws of family purity, can improve marital quality and satisfaction for individuals from other populations. If these strategies and procedures are indeed found to have positive predictive value, mental health practitioners can incorporate them into professional practice. This can heighten practitioners' sensitivity and ability to establish trust with their clients. These strategies

and procedures, when employed appropriately, can also potentially offer diminished marital satisfaction dilemmas in a significant portion of clientele seeking services.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation from Research Partners to Recruit Study Participants

Name of Local Library, Primary Care Center, or other Research Partner
Date

Dear (Name of Local Library, Primary Care Center, or other Research Partner),

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Effects of Religious Returnees' Observance of Family Purity Laws on Marital Satisfaction Scores within the (Name of Local Library, Primary Care Center, or other Research Partner). As part of this study, I authorize you to post advertisements within our facility/bulletin to recruit potential participants for your study. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing informed consent to all interested participants interested in participating in the study. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,
Authorization Official
Contact Information

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

Appendix B: Potential Participant Questionnaire

This form contains information needed to determine if you qualify to participate in this study. Please fill out the following information, to the best of your knowledge. All information will be kept confidential at all times. Thank you for your participation!

1. Chronological age: husband _____ wife _____
2. Geographic location: Home Address _____
 Apartment: _____
 City: _____
 State: _____
 Zip Code: _____
3. Number of years married: _____
4. Number of children in household: _____
5. Please check one of the following categories you identify religiously with:
 Religious from birth _____ Baal Teshuva _____
6. Please check the category most closely resembling your self-identifying level of observance of the Jewish laws of family purity:
 _____ Strict
 _____ Moderately Strict
 _____ Minimally Strict
 _____ Do not observe

Appendix C: RDAS

RDAS-Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Most people have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item.

Always Agree (5)	Almost Always Agree(4)	Occasionally Agree (3)	Frequently Disagree (2)	Almost Always Disagree (1)	Always Disagree (0)
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1. Religious matters
2. Demonstrations of affection
3. Making major decisions
4. Sex relations
5. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)
6. Career decisions

All the Time (0)	Most of the time (1)	More often than not (2)	Occasionally (3)	Rarely (4)	Never (5)
---------------------	-------------------------	----------------------------	---------------------	---------------	--------------

7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?
8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?
9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?
10. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?

All the time (4)	Most of the time (3)	More often than not (2)	Occasionally (1)	Never (0)
---------------------	-------------------------	----------------------------	---------------------	--------------

11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

Never (0)Less than (1)	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month (2)	Once or twice a week (3)	Once a day (4)	More often (5)
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12. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas
13. Work together on a project
14. Calmly discuss something

Appendix D: NSSS

The New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (NSSS)

Thinking about your sex life during the last six months, please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects:

- 1) The intensity of my sexual arousal
- 2) The quality of my orgasms
- 3) My “letting go” and surrender to sexual pleasure during sex
- 4) My focus/concentration during sexual activity
- 5) The way I sexually react to my partner
- 6) My body’ s sexual functioning
- 7) My emotional opening up in sex
- 8) My mood after sexual activity
- 9) The frequency of my orgasms
- 10) The pleasure I provide to my partner
- 11) The balance between what I give and receive in sex
- 12) My partner’ s emotional opening up during sex
- 13) My partner’ s initiation of sexual activity
- 14) My partner’ s ability to orgasm X
- 15) My partner’ s surrender to sexual pleasure (“letting go”)
- 16) The way my partner takes care of my sexual needs
- 17) My partner’ s sexual creativity
- 18) My partner’ s sexual availability
- 19) The variety of my sexual activities
- 20) The frequency of my sexual activity

^a Responses are anchored on the following scale: 1 = not at all satisfied. 2 = a little satisfied. 3 = moderately satisfied. 4 = very satisfied. 5 = extremely satisfied

Appendix E: Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale

Read each of the following statements, filling in the blank spaces with the name of one person you love or care for deeply. Rate your agreement with each statement according to the following scale, and enter the appropriate number between 1 and 9.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|------------|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Not at | | | | Moderately | | | | Extremely |
| All | | | | | | | | |
- _____ 1. I am actively supportive of _____'s well-being.
 - _____ 2 I have a warm relationship with _____.
 - _____ 3.I am able to count on _____ in times of need.
 - _____ 4. _____ is able to count on me in times of need.
 - _____ 5. I am willing to share myself and my possessions with _____.
 - _____ 6. I receive considerable emotional support from _____.
 - _____ 7. I give considerable emotional support to _____.
 - _____ 8. I communicate well with _____.
 - _____ 9. I value _____ greatly in my life.
 - _____ 10. I feel close to _____.
 - _____ 11. I have a comfortable relationship with _____.
 - _____ 12. I feel that I really understand _____.
 - _____ 13. I feel that _____ really understands me.
 - _____ 14. I feel that I can really trust _____.
 - _____ 15. I share deeply personal information about myself with _____.
 - _____ 16. Just seeing _____ excites me.
 - _____ 17. I find myself thinking about _____ frequently during the day.
 - _____ 18. My relationship with _____ is very romantic.
 - _____ 19. I find _____ to be very personally attractive.
 - _____ 20. I idealize _____.
 - _____ 21. I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as _____ does.
 - _____ 22. I would rather be with _____ than with anyone else.
 - _____ 23. There is nothing more important to me than my relationship with _____.
 - _____ 24. I especially like physical contact with _____.
 - _____ 25. There is something almost "magical" about my relationship with _____.
 - _____ 26. I adore _____.
 - _____ 27. I cannot imagine life without _____.
 - _____ 28. My relationship with _____ is passionate.
 - _____ 29. When I see romantic movies and read romantic books, I think of _____.
 - _____ 30. I fantasize about _____.
 - _____ 31. I know that I care about _____.
 - _____ 32. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with _____.
 - _____ 33. Because of my commitment to _____, I would not let other people come between us
 - _____ 34. I have confidence in the stability of my relationship with _____.
 - _____ 35. I could not let anything get in the way of my commitment to _____.
 - _____ 36. I expect my love for _____ to last for the rest of my life.
 - _____ 37. I will always feel a strong responsibility for _____.
 - _____ 38. I view my commitment to _____ as a solid one.
 - _____ 39. I cannot imagine ending my relationship with _____.
 - _____ 40. I am certain of my love for _____.
 - _____ 41. I view my relationship with _____ as permanent.

- _____ 42. I view my relationship with _____ as a good decision.
- _____ 43. I feel a sense of responsibility toward _____.
- _____ 44. I plan to continue my relationship with _____.
- _____ 45. Even when _____ is hard to deal with, I remain committed to our relationship.

SOURCE: "The Triangular Love Scale" from *The Triangle of Love: Intimacy, Passion, Commitment*, by Robert Sternberg.

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