

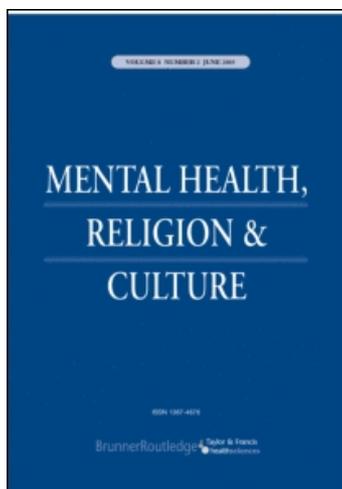
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### A phenomenological examination of dating attitudes in ultra-orthodox Jewish emerging adult women

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### A phenomenological examination of dating attitudes in ultra-orthodox Jewish emerging adult women

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The current study investigated the dating attitudes of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women using a qualitative analysis. Interviews were conducted with eight Ultra-Orthodox Jewish young women. Themes reflected pressures associated with the dating process and the importance of dating for marriage. Additionally, respondents expressed satisfaction with the dating system due to its single-minded focus on finding a marriage partner and due to perceptions of alternative more Western systems.

**Keywords:** dating attitudes; ultra-orthodox Jewish women; emerging adults

#### Introduction

As migration expands throughout the Western world, mental health practitioners are encountering increasing difficulties in providing culturally meaningful therapeutic interventions (Constantine, Kindaichi, Arorash, Donnelly, & Jung, 2002). Considering the unique culture-specific experiences that may be intertwined with the mental health difficulties reported by a client, clinicians must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to work with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007). As a response to the emerging challenge, many avenues are being utilised by clinicians to increase their level of understanding of and sensitivity to various cultures. From requiring training in cross-cultural counselling as part of graduate education to the increased emphasis in the research community on investigations concerning culturally specific issues, practitioners have a significant reservoir of resources to enhance their ability to serve multi-cultural populations.

Within this effort, one area of research that has been receiving recent attention has been on the dating attitudes and practices of emerging adults in various cultures. The need for investigations examining dating attitudes and practices is immense considering the integral part dating plays in the lives of adolescents and early adults (Tang & Zuo, 2000). Mental health practitioners attempting to provide meaningful intervention during this developmental stage would gain immensely by having a clear understanding of the typical difficulties experienced by their emerging adult client.

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Literature over the past 30 years using Western samples has reported an increased tendency towards permissiveness regarding sexual behaviours in dating (Earle & Perricone, 1986; Roche & Ramsbey, 1993). Furthermore, previous studies have demonstrated the importance of homogamy in selecting a dating and marriage partner (Knox, Zusman, & Nieves, 1997). More specifically, studies have examined the significance of religious involvement in the selection of dating partners (Bailey & Cross, 1990).

However, the scientific literature is limited with regards to culture-specific dating habits (Tang & Zuo, 2000). The limited literature using multi-cultural samples has forwarded distinctly different attitudes expressed by adolescents and emerging adults from various cultures. These cultural differences in dating practices and attitudes have been reported in many areas of the dating process. Studies examining the age at which dating typically begins suggest considerable cultural variability. In a study comparing US and Chinese adolescents, the average age for beginning dating reported by the US sample was 14.68, whereas the Chinese adolescents reported that dating began at age 18 (Tang & Zuo, 2000). Cross-cultural variations have been reported in dating experiences before marriage as well. In some cultures, young adults have very little contact with marriage partners until the actual wedding (Al-Johar, 2005).

Although several studies are beginning to shed light on the unique dating experiences faced by individuals from various cultures, the dating attitudes and practices of Ultra-Orthodox Jews have received very little scientific attention. Schnall (2006) suggests that the limited clinical work examining the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in general is a function of the difficulty in recognizing Jews as a culturally distinct group. The issue becomes more complex within Orthodox Jewry, where the culture has allowed for a strong American influence while remaining unique in its religious and cultural practices.

Within the array of denominations of Jews, Orthodox Jews “accept that G-d gave the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, to the People of Israel at Mount Sinai, along with a divinely ordained interpretation of its commands” (Schnall, 2006, p. 277). Orthodox Jews apply the teachings of the Torah to all aspects of life, including daily routines, personal interactions, family life, and business matters. In a description of the dating process among Orthodox Jews, Rockman (1994) explains that traditional Jewish culture places great emphasis on finding a mate and creating a stable family unit. Decisions about mate selection are very often driven by religious dictum. Among Ultra-Orthodox Jews, it is common for a potential couple to be arranged by a matchmaker and lengthy courtships are discouraged. For the first meeting, the male meets the female at her home and after meeting the female’s parents the couple spends the date in conversation in a public place. Subsequent meetings are conducted in a similar fashion. Premarital sexual relationships are unacceptable and even physical touch is forbidden during the courtship until after marriage. However, Rockman (1994) clarifies that even within Ultra-Orthodox Jewry there is much variation in these practices. Once married, Shai (2002) reports, the divorce rates among Orthodox Jews are lower than that of the broader society.

Although several studies describing the courtship and marriage process of Orthodox Jews exist, the attitudes and habits towards dating within the Ultra-Orthodox community have yet to be examined. Within Orthodox Judaism individual practice can be placed on a spectrum between what is referred to in the Jewish community as “Modern Orthodox” and “Ultra-Orthodox.” Although individuals on both sides of the spectrum adhere to the foundation of grounding practice on the tenants of the Torah, variations in strictness of practice, dress, engagement with other cultures, and cross-gender interactions can be found between the two extremes.

The current study is a qualitative examination of the attitudes and habits towards dating of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women. We have chosen to use a qualitative approach to capture the rich and unique experiences of this particular group. Considering that this area of study lacks the research necessary for a highly structured quantitative technique, has not been well studied in the past, and is a sensitive topic of investigation, a qualitative approach is warranted (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Shai, 2002). More specifically the current study used a phenomenological approach which is based on a small sample that provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under examination.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

Participants in the current study included eight Ultra-Orthodox Jewish, single women between the ages of 19 and 23 ( $M = 20.62$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ) from a large metropolitan area in the southeastern US. The Jewish community in the area is an extremely large and active community containing many Jewish educational, religious, and cultural institutions. The participants were recruited by research assistants through personal acquaintances and were specifically targeted based on a predetermined criterion (Patton, 2002). The predetermined criterion focused on selecting participants who were Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women and currently dating. Their status as belonging to the Ultra-Orthodox community and their current dating was confirmed based on a self-report prior to the interview. All of the participants self-identified as coming from “Yeshivish/Litvish” families, which is a term used to differentiate Ultra-Orthodox Jews with a Lithuanian heritage as opposed to Ultra-Orthodox Jews from a Hasidic legacy. As is common in phenomenological examinations accessing in-depth responses providing the necessary understanding of the phenomenon under investigation was more important in this study than having a representative sample (Creswell, 1994).

### ***Interview protocol***

The women were interviewed using 21 semi-structured questions about their personal dating habits and attitudes. The questions were developed using previous literature (Rockman, 1994; Shai, 2002) consultation with other researchers in the field (K. Loewenthal, personal communication, November, 2006), and discussions among the authors about their personal experiences as Ultra-Orthodox Jews. Common Hebrew language terminology was used in the questions.

The primary question posed to the participants was “Are you comfortable with the methods you use to find dating partners or would you prefer a different method?” Other explorations included “Do you feel any pressure from your family and community to date and get married, and if so in what way? What methods do you use to find dating partners? How important is it for you to find someone that practices a similar level and type of Judaism to you? Have your attitudes about the system changed since beginning to go out?” The interviewer followed the participants’ responses with prompts in order to gain the most accurate and rich picture of the experiences under investigation.

### **Procedure**

Prior to the beginning of the interview, consent was obtained from the participant. The interviews were conducted at the participant's home, or at our department, in a quiet area. The interviews, which lasted for about 45 minutes, were recorded, and transcribed. The interviewers, composed of two research assistants, underwent training in qualitative techniques. Both interviewers were Ultra-Orthodox women which assisted in enhancing openness of the participants (Weeks & Moore, 1981). Considering that the interviewers were peripherally acquainted with some of the participants, particular attention was given both in the consent form and verbally to conveying to the participants the importance of confidentiality in order to avoid social desirability in the responses.

### **Data analysis**

Results were analysed using the phenomenological method (Spinelli, 1989). The assumption of this method is that it is difficult for the interviewer to remove their biases and personal beliefs from the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In order to minimise subjectivity, interviewers discussed their expectations and assumptions about the possible findings and attempted to dismiss them prior to the interviews (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). Each transcript was broken down into themes by the investigator who conducted the interview. Once the initial categorisation of all responses was established, a second research assistant completed an additional categorisation. Responses that were categorised differently by the two assistants were discussed and settled. Subsequently, the investigators analysed all the transcripts producing a hierarchy of common themes.

### **Results**

Although the narrative provided by the participants included a variety of ideas, several emerging themes were identified from the content of the interviews. The themes were (1) the importance of dating for marriage, (2) no prior experience with men, (3) using a third-party for matchmaking, (4) the importance of religiosity in a dating partner, (5) satisfaction with the system, (6) pressure to marry, and (7) unfair advantage for men.

#### **1. Dating for marriage**

Participants expressed that their purpose in dating was solely to find a marriage partner. Dating for recreation was deemed pointless, and although dating was seen as fun the participants were always mindful of the goal of marriage. Participant 7 noted:

*"I think it gets to a certain point in life where you've taken everything you could take...and gleaned everything you could take and now you want to give it back. You want to create. You want to create your own home, you want to create your own life and your own world...its' very marriage oriented it's not out for fun...I think the focus is so healthy. You sit across from somebody and you want to get to know them, and the whole time it's in the back of your mind...is this person going to be the right partner for me? You could be having the funnest [sic] time but it's always on the back of your mind and it's just very goal oriented. And I think it's a very healthy thing."*

As a result of this exclusive focus, participants expressed the need to gain as much information possible from their partner as to their suitability as a spouse.

Hence, all meetings revolved around discussing life goals and plans. Participant 2 expressed:

*"...you want someone who has the same goals as you, you don't want to have the heartache of falling for someone that's really not going to make a good husband for you...if it was just a regular guy and we were just going out to eat or whatever just to be friends it would totally not be stressful, like I would just have a normal conversation with him...I could have gone out with him more times even if I didn't see him as husband material...but when you're going into shidduchim (dating), you're dating for marriage and you're not going to continue dating if you're not going to marry him."*

Aside from the taboo on pre-marital intercourse, the Ultra-Orthodox community forbids even touch between unmarried couples. The lack of physical contact during the dating process was seen as contributing to the ability of the women to make sound judgements about the suitability of the partner. Participant 4 explained:

*"Physical contact is so strong... that it blinds you so much, you touch somebody... and you truly feel different, you feel more connected to the person...When you're not touching the person... you're more professional, you take decisions much more seriously and you're very oriented; you don't lose time... it's much easier to say no when you're not touching, not involved, it's just "Ok no, he's not for me, or ok yes, he is for me."*

The length of time a couple typically dated before making a commitment for marriage is between 1 and 3 months, although subjects believed that the amount of time was flexible. Participant 6 noted:

*"Why push it off and go out for three years, when you could be living three years happily married together?"*

## **2. No prior experience with men**

The majority of the Ultra-Orthodox community sends their children to gender-segregated schools and hence interactions between the sexes are not common. The women in our study reported very little prior social contact with men before they began dating. Participant 8 detailed the contributing social circumstance:

*"I didn't go to school with guys. I was in separate schools all my life and I really didn't have much to do with them at all. I guess I never was in a situation where I was interacting with them."*

A similar context was seen when participant 2 described her experiences growing up:

*"Really pretty limited. Of course my parents were kind of strict about that but it was also my choice... its very distracting and it's like not at the right time... there's not really much of a point, you're not going to marry them anyway... and that's not what was accepted in my social circles so basically it was talking to boy cousins a lot... a conversation or two with a guy from the yeshiva (all male religious seminary)... whispering with friends kind of thing like "Oh I have a crush on him!"... not really anything major... When you're younger you want to have a boyfriend... but intellectually you know it's really not the right thing and you want to keep your life basically going straight."*

Participant 3 noted:

*"I didn't really have much... cause I went to an all girls school and seminary but I had contact with boy cousins but over all I didn't really have much interaction with guys... just because I didn't have much interaction with guys before but I don't feel it makes much of a difference when I go on a date, I don't feel uncomfortable or anything."*

### 3. *Third-party matchmaker*

Women in the Ultra-Orthodox community have little or no prior experience with men. In order to find potential dating partners, participants are commonly set up by a third-party. Although matches are often made by professional matchmakers (*shadchanim*), common acquaintances also set up individuals for dating. However, even within this system, there are different levels of engagement in the process. Participant 8 described a more passive approach:

*"Usually either someone I meet knows of someone or someone thinks of me and sets me up... I don't go and try to meet people, I just try to wait to see if someone is going to set me up or if someone has any ideas or if I meet someone who has any ideas. I haven't gone to many shadchanim (matchmakers)... I haven't been very proactive."*

In a more proactive approach, participant 7 explained:

*"...Networking with professional shadchanim (matchmakers)... otherwise I just try to network with people as much as possible... people in the community, if they ask me, I'm very open, I tell them what I'm looking for. I think it's just about networking with as many people as I can..."*

After the third-party suggests a potential dating partner, prior to the date, inquiries about the proposed individual are done by both sides. Considering that the sole objective of dating is to find a marriage partner, there is a great need to gain information about the potential partner before the actual meeting. Women prefer not to "waste time" going out on a date with someone that *a priori* is not a suitable marriage partner. Therefore, both men and women do some investigating before agreeing to date a particular individual. Participant 8 explained:

*"I try to find out as much as I can and I try to speak to people who are in contact (with him) at that time or who are friends with him or people who he interacts with on a constant basis and... find out... what kind of person he is: what he's like and what he does, what's important to him... what kind of personality he has, what kind of temperament he has,... things like that."*

In a description of the importance of knowing about the potential partner before dating, participant 4 noted:

*"A lot of times people will say I have the perfect person for you and... they don't even know you. So it's a waste of time cause you get ready for it, you dress up... girls are very into making illusions and thinking and getting married before they even meet the person. So I hate that feeling and going out and seeing the person and saying Oh my G-d, he's not even near what I want."*

In an additional advantage of being set up with a potential partner using a mediator participant 5 explained:

*"I'm very comfortable with it... I guess if you're not used to it, it would be awkward. But I think the other way is awkward cause if you don't like the guy than after one date you have to be like "Um, I'm really not into you... Sorry. But this way you just go through the shadchan (matchmaker) and... it just makes things a lot easier... it's very well thought out... everything's taken care of."*

### 4. *Importance of religiosity in a dating partner*

Religiosity was a significant consideration in choosing a dating partner. As a continuation of the focus on marriage during the dating process, the religiosity of the partner was seen

as contributing to a future positive union. Participant 5 noted:

*"It's most important... more important than personality I guess... I mean I could deal with people who aren't as religious as me, or more religious than me but I would never be able to raise a family with them."*

Describing a more concrete issue that may arise if there are differences between partners in religiosity participant 1 detailed:

*"(Religiosity is) most important... it more clearly defines the home that you're going to have because if you're not similar religiously then you're going to have two people going in opposite directions and... if the wife is more religious than her husband, then he's going out doing things that she doesn't necessarily approve of... it's inconsistent."*

Participant 8 explained:

*"I think it really contributes a lot to a marriage. It will help in the marriage and you respect each other much more when you have values that you appreciate in each other."*

In a minor variation participant 4 elaborated:

*"When I first started dating... if the guy I was dating was much more religious than me, I would get very inspired... and if he had a lower level religiously speaking I would get more laid back... I really don't care if he's... less religious, more religious, I really don't care. I mean it depends of course how much less religious and how much more religious he is but... what I am really looking for is someone that wants to go the same way... we don't have to be at the same level as long as we want to get to the same place."*

In addition to the influence of religiosity in mate selection, the norms dictating the types of activities to engage in during dating were reported by the participants as stemming from religiosity. Participant 1 clarified:

*"... it defines where I would go on a date, I wouldn't go to a movie with a boy on a date... it also defines what I would talk about. There are certain things that I think are inappropriate to discuss with a boy at least in the beginning... I guess just sensitivity like that."*

## **5. Satisfaction with the system**

Overall, our participants expressed satisfaction with the Ultra-Orthodox dating system. However, several concerns were expressed. Although the Ultra-Orthodox community attempts to shelter their children from outside influences, several participants expressed a desire for a more Western approach to dating. Participant 2 noted:

*"In a way I feel like I want to go out and meet guys in the American way but intellectually I know it makes much more sense to find out about the guys and know if he's really right for you vs. just like falling for..."*

Participant 1 expressed:

*"I think normal social events need to become more accepted in the Orthodox community so that boys and girls can meet each other on their own in a natural setting... people in the Shidduch (matchmaking) system always seem to be in a rush, after a second or third date people are already forcing you to decide whether or not it's worth going out again 'cause it could go somewhere, and then there isn't really enough time to, just get comfortable with somebody, hang out, see if you could just even be friends before you're thinking already can this person be my spouse... everybody needs to just chill out a little bit about the dating."*

Satisfaction was expressed in reference to the system's ability to assist in selecting a partner for marriage. Participant 4 noted:

*"I think it's the best way to meet somebody cause your very focused and you're not losing time and you're not being distracted by other things... you're not touching the person, so*

*it's very rational . . . and girls mostly are very into emotions. . . like 'Oh, he's so sweet and he gave me this and that' So when you put rationality into it I think it's better . . . this is a decision you have to put a lot of reason into . . . you're gonna spend the rest of you're life with that person."*

Participant 6 explained:

*"I don't know what goes on in other places but for me it's working. People could say you don't know your husband until you marry him. But I think it's perfect this way because at the end of the day, if you love him, you love him, and you'll know that right away. I mean, maybe not the first date but the tenth date . . ."*

Several of the participants expressed their satisfaction with the system in comparison to their impression of the alternative. Participant 2 explained:

*"Overall, taking into consideration all the other ways people get married nowadays, it's one of the best, one of the most balanced. It balances like head and heart basically. You know about the person beforehand so you can make an intellectual decision and then you go out on the date and then you can . . . connect with them on an emotional level vs. the secular way of dating which is almost all heart . . ."*

Although the overall system was seen as useful, several participants expressed the need to differentiate between the way the system is intended to work and the way some people within the system function. Participant 7 noted:

*"I don't think anything is wrong with the shidduch (matchmaking) system per se, I think people mess it up . . . People handle it wrongly and that's what I'm not comfortable with . . . The system's not perfect. I think the actual system of having a go between, finding out information before hand, and then giving your feedback to the go between is a good system . . . The system is only as good as its players."*

## **6. Pressure to marry**

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the pressure felt to get married. They attributed this pressure to several entities with the community. The majority of participants pointed to a systematic undercurrent community pressure. Participant 2 described:

*" . . . I feel like there's an underlying kind of pressure mostly for girls because they want what's best for you and they don't want you to become one of those older singles . . . everyone's like making it their personal project that I should get married."*

This subtle community pressure was described by participant 3:

*" . . . when you're not married by a certain age you feel a lot of peer pressure . . . people start to think something is wrong with you but you just didn't find the right one yet."*

Although not common to the majority of responses, participant 1 described the pressure felt from family and friends:

*" . . . from my grandfather . . . every time I see him, he says that he's getting older and he really wants to see me get married . . . a lot of pressure, even though I know he just wants what's best for me, I try to explain to him that it's not my fault that I'm not married, it's just been a hard process and he doesn't seem to understand that . . . so he pressures me a lot; every time I speak to him, he's on my case . . . friend's parents coming over to me and asking how my dating life is going, which is very nice and they're all concerned, and they want what's best for me too, but it's a little bit of a personal issue that they all seem to get involved in . . ."*

Other participants reported on pressures from clergy members. Participant 4 recounted:

*"I actually didn't want to date and... a very well-known Rebbetzin (wife of a Rabbi) in Israel told me "You are ready, you are a very mature girl, you are pretty, you are young, you have to go out and I have the perfect guy for you!"*

### 7. Unfair advantage for men

An interesting demographic phenomenon exists in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. Considering that women begin dating at about 18–19 years of age, following a post-high school year studying in a religious seminary in Israel, and men typically delay dating until close to age 22, there is a disproportionate number of available women dating at any given time. This limited pool of men has created an unfair advantage for men in the dating process. Participant 1 noted:

*"...Boys... have a bunch of other girls who are waiting on their lists... to go out with. They're... in a rush to get over with one of you, so that they can go on to the next one, which doesn't give every girl a fair chance."*

Participant 5 explained:

*"... there's a major issue with like guys having the upper hand. There are more good girls than good guys, and there are more girls than guys in general... Cause lets say you were rhed (suggested) to a guy... and he's really interested and you're really interested. And, he has a whole list of girls... and you have no one... than you're going to have to go out with him, cause he'll just cross you off his list and go to someone else."*

### Discussion

Considering the limited work on dating attitudes and experiences within the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community and the sensitive nature of the topic the use of a phenomenological approach in this study was warranted (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Shai, 2002). By using a qualitative approach, our data provided a comprehensive and detailed portrait of the unique dating attitudes and experiences of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women.

The multidimensional aspects of culture have been documented in numerous studies (Sue, 1990). The classic illustration of the iceberg, with its tip above the surface representing the revealed aspects of culture and the bulk of the iceberg underneath the surface representing the majority of the cultural experience which is beyond our vision, is further expressed when examining the unique dating experience of Ultra-Orthodox women. The exclusive focus during the dating process on finding a marriage partner is consistent with previous work on Orthodox Jewry (Rockman, 1994). However, although the notion that a culture guided by traditional principles may focus their dating activities around marriage may not be novel, the way in which this orientation permeates all aspects of the experience is profound. The use of third-party matchmaking, the research conducted by each party prior to the date, and the actual agenda for the date are all influenced by the single-mindedness of finding a suitable marriage partner.

The struggle of balancing the traditions of the past while accommodating to modern Western society reported by many minority cultural groups (Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000) can be seen by the narrative of several of our participants. The appreciation of the

traditional dating system with the desire to also have an opportunity to meet potential mates the “American way,” illustrates the way this struggle manifests itself in the dating attitudes of these women.

Although a considerable emphasis in cross-cultural research is on intergroup variability, the current study highlights the need to understand intragroup processes as well. Differences in the approach to engaging third-party matchmakers, from a more passive attitude to active networking, in addition to differences in the way religiosity of the dating partner influences decisions about marriage, mirrors findings by Rockman (1994) suggesting that even within Ultra-Orthodox Jewry, there is much variation in dating practices.

The implications of these findings for mental health practitioners are considerable. First, on a more global level, the themes generated from the participants’ responses highlight the nuances involved in the practice of Orthodox Judaism. For example, the circumstances underlying the decision to begin dating and the specificity of the dating process exemplify the vastness of cultural expression. Freidman, Friedlander, and Blustein (2005) emphasise the need for psychotherapists to understand that Judaism is not only a religion but a complex culture permeating many aspects of daily life. Psychotherapists looking to serve this population must educate themselves about this complex group. Especially, when dealing with clients undergoing a transition, such as the dating process, which entails adherence to a specific set of religious and cultural prescriptions, it may be advisable for a therapist to seek guidance from Jewish clergy members in an attempt to understand the dynamics involved, and to reassure the client that the counselling process is in accordance with religious observance. Several studies document the ambivalence of Orthodox Jews towards seeking mental health services and consultations with a rabbi, for example, can help minimise the uneasiness (Bilu & Witztum, 1993; Schnall, 2006; Sublette & Trappler, 2000).

More specifically, anxieties experienced by Orthodox Jews in this developmental stage may be based on the importance of dating and the pressures involved. The culturally sensitive therapist should allow the clients to explore these pressures. Additionally, when working with this population intervention may entail some educational components regarding the thoughts and behaviours of the opposite sex. The limited prior experience with men may foster a profound fear of the unknown in the lead-up to actual dating and educating the client about men may help in alleviating these fears. The limited experience with men may also play a role in the decision about matching client and therapist by gender. Non-married female clients may be more comfortable expressing themselves with a female therapist due to this limited exposure to men (Schnall, 2006).

There are several limitations to the current study which future work in this area should address. Although the study provides an in-depth representation of the experiences of our participants, findings may not generalise beyond the homogeneous sample included in the study. Even within the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, there is considerable segmentation and the experiences reported by our sample may not reflect the experiences of other Ultra-Orthodox young women. Our sample included women in the early stages of the dating process who may have a different attitude about the system in comparison to young women who have been dating for several years with no success. Future work should include older women as well. Additionally, assessing a group of married women who have had success in finding a marriage partner may provide a different perspective on this process. An additional perspective to be examined in future work should be a similar study using a sample of men which may provide a broader picture of the interdependent dynamics of dating. Finally, our participants may have reported on the positive aspects of

their experiences while minimising their negative attitudes in order to present a virtuous view of a culture they are obviously very proud of.

In sum, our results highlight the important role finding a marriage partner plays in the dating attitudes and practices of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women. This preoccupation permeates all aspects of the experience. The current findings contribute to an emergent area of research examining cultural variations in dating attitudes and practices. Our findings hold clinical significance by assisting the culturally sensitive clinician in understanding the unique experiences of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women.

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